EXPANDING THE OBJECT: POST-CONCEPTUAL DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

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Abstract

This project is concerned with exploring the relationship between post-conceptual dance and its state as object. As a practice-led research project it aims to do so both through the written thesis and through artistic practice, which is here presented as a series of video projects that extend representations of dance. Over five chapters I trace the permutation of the 'object' from choreographer to spectator, participant, editor, collector and 're-framer', arguing for the multiplicity of roles that choreographers, and by extension dancers, take on at the beginning of the 21st century.

My interdisciplinary research draws from a variety of theoretical discourses including performance theory, visual cultures and critical theory, and is therefore both relevant to the field of dance studies and beyond the discipline. Given the practice-led nature of the project, my aim has been to expand choreographic performance practices and to increases the range of 'objects' that can be considered dance. Therefore, the project resides in the gaps and tensions between practice and theory, performance and documentation, language and dance, text and movement, choreography and objecthood.

Throughout I argue that post-conceptual dance operates within an extended field in which dancers and choreographers are expanding the boundaries of the art form, making dance relevant to a broader artistic, cultural, political and social context.

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1. *The End of Choreography*: Post-Conceptual Dance as Expanded Performance Practice

This project is concerned with exploring the relationship between dance and its state as object. As a practice-led research project it aims to do so both through the written thesis and through artistic practice, which is here presented as a series of video projects that extend representations of dance. The central question of this research project can be defined as: in what ways, and to what extent, can dance be understood as denying its own object and subsequently, how can choreographic performance practice then be understood as a form of expansion of this object? The rationale for arguing for this form of expansion in dance is manifold: it increases the range of objects that can be considered dance, opens up the art form, redefines and expands the discipline, thereby making dance relevant to a wider artistic, cultural, political and social context.

Dance speaks to the Western contemporary cultural landscape in a fundamental way. As curator, writer and dramaturge André Lepecki writes in his introduction to *Dance*: 'It is a curious and still rather under-theorized phenomenon that dance, over the past decade, has become a crucial referent for thinking, making and curating visual and performance-based art' (2012, p.14). The fact that Whitechapel Gallery, a contemporary art institution of international standing, has commissioned a volume on dance to be included in the Documents of Contemporary Art series indicates this shift in thinking. Dance, and also performance, are currently in demand and are

rapidly becoming part of established and validated systems and institutions of knowledge exchange, creating discursive sites of encounter, dialogue and exchange.

For instance, 2012 saw the inauguration of Tate Modern's new live/performing arts and installation space The Tanks as well as the opening of the *BMW Tate Live* series. Furthermore, Tino Seghal's *These associations* was the first ever Turbine Hall Unilever commission to solely involve humans as subjects and objects of the art work. In the four years spanning 2010-2014 the Hayward Gallery has presented exhibitions dealing with invisibility (*Invisible – Art about the Unseen 1957-2012*) and ephemeral materials (*Light Show*), but more importantly for dance, *MOVE – Choreographing You* and *Art of Change: New Directions from China*, two exhibitions that involved dancers and performers occupying a space conventionally reserved for objects. During the same period, the Barbican Centre presented two exhibitions involving dancers: *Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown, Gordon Matta-Clark: Pioneers of the Downtown Scene, New York 1970s* and *The Bride and the Bachelors: Duchamp with Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Johns*. 2014 saw the retrospective *Table of Contents* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), a live movement installation by British choreographer Siobhan Davies co-created with dance artists Andrea Buckley, Helka Kaski, Rachel Krische, Charlie Morrissey and Matthias Sperling, and *Yvonne Rainer: Dance Works* at Raven Row Gallery, the first exhibition to include live performances of Rainer's alongside other aspects of her practice.

The incorporation of dance and performance into the museum, gallery and exhibition context is not the result of certain curators and directors suddenly becoming interested in these art forms, but instead marks a cultural turn towards the realisation that present forms of objecthood and material production need to be questioned and rethought. Dance offers a space and time for exploration and debate of these issues. Freed from the representational space of the theatrical stage and incorporated into the arts space, dance has the opportunity to be seen by a different, and larger, audience and more crucially, to open up and expand its capacities, allowing the art form to be relevant to contemporary life.[1] At the same time, when dance is incorporated into the gallery context it has the potential to critique (on both practical and conceptual levels) established institutions, systems and norms, therefore broadening not only dance practices, but also visual art practices.

For instance, if dance escapes an ontology of presence, it disappears at the same time as it appears (Phelan, 1993), it may have the potential to escape the current economy of representation and commodity production. Dance therefore offers us a glimpse of a potential alternative way of engaging with and being in the world, one that is not based on object-oriented consumption and appreciation. Particularly, in the European post 2008 economic and

[1] For example, according to the press release on the Tate website from 19 September 2013, over 5.5 million people visited Tate Modern in 2012-2013. http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/2012-13-year-success-and-worldwide-development-tate [Accesssed 18 August 2014].

political crisis, dance carries the potential tools to make us rethink our relationship and attachment to objects and 'stable' conditions of living in times of precarity that mark the beginning of the 21st century.

In this context Lepecki writes on dance's political potential: 'we can say [dance's ephemerality] performs, bespeaks and underlines the current and implacable precarization of life, bought on by the momentarily triumphant neoliberal globalization of financial capital' (2012, p.15). As the world around us accumulates even more objects and accelerates at an even higher speed (Berardi, 2011), dance can offer a reflective critique of the relationship between movement, flow and stillness (which is not to be mistaken for standing still) and remind us of their mutual dependency. Lepecki has written extensively on the critique of dance as continuous movement, proposing instead an ontology of slowness or even stillness in his book *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2005). His argument complicates the unproblematic understanding of movement as a smooth form of becoming; precisely because dance has the fundamental potential to continually move, it can also rupture and break this assumption, for example by incorporating stillness into its vocabulary. In the practical explorations that I produced as part of this investigation I use stillness, and a minimum of movement, not as dance's 'other' but as necessary devices that bring out the tensions and contradictions in this project on the expansion of the object.[2]

[2] Lepecki's proposal was, and continues to be, a paramount contribution to the field of dance studies, not only because of the concepts and methodologies he proposed but because it gave practitioners, theorists and historians new tools with which to analyse dance and choreography. Yet one might ask, what comes after dance has been exhausted? Can we

I suggest that dance, as an expanded 'object', is fundamentally concerned with one or more individuals' immediate relation with the world and other people. It can act as a model *for* reality (by way of directing) and *of* reality (by way of reflecting). This has been seen in dance performance and art practice since the second half of the 20th century with reoccurring themes such as collaboration, participation, spectatorship, authorship, the relationship between collective and individual, object and subject, process and product and notions of ephemerality, liveness and presence, which are all important issues in my project on the expansion of dance and its state as object.

1.1 From Conceptual to Post-conceptual Dance

The key concerns for this project on choreography as expanded practice outlined above, have been explored historically in both the Northern American postmodern moment in dance of the 1960s and 1970s and the more recent European contemporary 'conceptual' dance movement since the 1990s. The 1960s and 1970s were an important turning point for dance history. Dance artists such as Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay and Douglas Dunn, amongst others, redefined the discipline so that subsequently a wider range of movement could be classified as dance. The so-called 'conceptual' dance moment of the 1990s saw the emergence of several experimental European choreographers in the contemporary dance scene: Jérôme Bel (France), Boris Charmatz (France), Alice Chauchat

find renewed potentiality after exhaustion? This quest for the after or post of dance (after exhaustion) has been a key preoccupation in my research project.

(France/Germany), João Fiadeiro (Portugal), Philipp Gehmacher (Austria), La Ribot (Spain), Thomas Lehmen (Germany), Xavier Le Roy (France), Vera Mantero (Portugal), Martin Nachbar (Germany), Eszter Salamon (Hungary/Germany), Meg Stuart (Belgium) and Felix Rückert (Germany), to name a few. The development of conceptual dance as a distinctive category was an important moment for contemporary dance, and indeed contemporary art, because it established the terms of engagement that inform many critical choreographic practices. Conceptual and post-modern dance are instrumental to the rethinking of current choreography and these practices are essential to a reading of current critical discourse in dance. Performance theorist and maker Bojana Cvejić has defined the term conceptual dance and suggests that we read 'not what kind of object a dance performance is, but what kind of concept of dance it proposes' (2006, online). In this project I use the term 'post-conceptual dance' to describe my own artistic practice and that of other contemporary artists and choreographers producing artworks at the beginning of the 21st century. I use the prefix 'post' here not as a negation but in a double sense of coming after and permeated by conceptual dance. Cvejić asks how choreography can be instrumentalised 'to pose and solve problems, which wouldn't only be specific to dance, but would go beyond the discipline' (2013, online).[3]

[3] The desire to go beyond the discipline is an ambition for this research project even though it is located in the field of dance. I would like to think that my practice is interdisciplinary, not in a way of combining two or more art forms with each other, but in that it develops practices of choreography that are relevant not just dance, not just to art, but to ways of seeing the world and one's own place within it.

Post-conceptual dance does this by looking towards its own condition and calls for a redefinition of what is the proper object of dance, questioning and critiquing what constitutes the characteristics and representations of the discipline. What can be conceived of as dance? How can dance produce a thought, a concept, a question or a problem instead of an object? How can it instigate rather than reflect thinking and making processes? What differentiates post-conceptual from conceptual dance is the fact that it is not only self-referential but also expands its critique into other areas outside of dance, for instance theatre, performance and visual art as well as potentially infiltrating political, economic and cultural structures. This questioning function in post-conceptual dance can be found in a plurality of current choreographic practices, making it possible for choreographers to create work that exceeds the boundaries of dance, pushing at and expanding the discipline of dance.

Therefore, I do not attempt to justify or claim the practice that I have produced as part of this project as ‘dance’. What remains crucial is that I have chosen to locate it in relation to the field of dance as an expanded object. This is important for the contextualisation and perception of the project both inside and outside the field of dance. The question ‘Is this dance?’ or ‘But where is the dance here?’ are not questions that concern me in this project. Rather, the aim of the project is to extend the notion of what is considered dance by actually exercising an expanded dance practice. It examines how dance practice, in an expanded field, can contribute to and extend the theory of dance.

1.2 From Denial to Expansion

I began this project with the thesis that post-conceptual dance is currently involved with a variety of denials; of dance, of dancing, of moving, of theatricality, of liveness, of documentation, of its state and status as object. However, over a period of time I realised that what was indeed happening was an expansion of dance rather than a denial. This transition from 'denial' (a term occupied by a negative association) to 'expansion' (a term more positively situated) constitutes a crucial movement in this project, both conceptually as well as methodologically. I argue in the chapters that follow that both my own practice as well as the ones of the artists that I examine, namely Tino Sehgal and BADco., can be defined as post-conceptual dance, as they increase the range of 'objects' that can be considered dance.

The following video works, which I created between 2012 and 2014, and which I submit on a DVD together with this thesis, constitute the practice element of this research project: *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* (2012), *Learning about the 60s* (2012), *Screen Tests* (2013) and *The End of Choreography* (2013). They were presented together in a solo exhibition titled *The End of Choreography* at Lima Zulu Project Space (London) from 8th to 13th March 2014.[4] Furthermore, the videos were part of several group exhibitions: Recherché at Wolverhampton Art Gallery from 21st September to 5th October 2013, Peckham Space OPEN 2013 (London) from 29th

[4] Please see Appendix 4 for the exhibition notes.

November to 20th December 2013 and artsdepot OPEN 2014 (London) from 8th to 24th April 2014, as well as being presented at The Performance Hub Research Festival (Walsall) on 4th October 2013. In order to ensure coherence and maximise the potential for dialogue and exchange, I ask the reader to engage with the specific piece of practice by watching the video work (provided on the DVD) at the beginning of each corresponding chapter, more specifically Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The methodology I propose with this research project takes an interdisciplinary approach and opens-up the object of dance to other subject areas. Even though I consider myself a practitioner, I am very interested in theoretical and conceptual thought and the potential exchange with dance practice. This theoretical engagement is important for the discipline of dance as a relatively young academic discipline. One might question though, what is the specific purpose of theory in a practice-led research project like this one.

The roles theory takes in this thesis are manifold. First and foremost, theoretical ideas serve as a source of inspiration, incentive and provocation for my own conceptual thinking before, during and after the process of developing artistic practice. Theoretical readings have been the starting point and motivation for creating my choreographic work in two instances particularly: *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* and *End of Choreography*. The first usage and usefulness of theory looks for questions, rather than answers, in theoretical materials.

Theoretical citations traditionally also have a more hierarchical function in academic writing as they introduce a voice of authority, which acts as 'back-up', verification or justification for the arguments that I am trying to make with this practice-led research project. This is the second function of theory in this thesis, theory as confirmation and affirmation.

Lastly, the theory explored in this thesis actually acts as raw material for performance. This is particularly visible in *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* as well as in *The End of Choreography*. This last use of theory is particularly intriguing for me as it is an intentionally illegitimate, unlawful, misusing and misquoting practice that challenges theory and offers new ways of reading this theory. It therefore produces new knowledge and is exactly the opposite of the second use, which is claiming theory as justification or authority. It also turns the first usage, the idea of provocation, on its head as it folds both provocation and authority into one. In this way theory becomes practice and again becomes theory. This usage questions the categorical distinction of theory and practice, making it difficult to uphold the binary position, and questioning the order of dependency between theory and practice. I would argue that artists who produce works which use words of theory in this way, as material for a performance (or dance) practice, as it is the case in *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo*, refuse to acknowledge the theory/practice distinction in practical terms. At least they do not decide in advance where the distinction falls as they see their art to be the occasion of working out where it falls or as an invitation to the viewer to work out where the distinction

falls. It could be argued that theory itself is to be considered a form of practice, that is, the practice of thinking. Theory is then no longer unproblematically outside practice and once it is embedded inside, it becomes something other than theory.

I will now bring the first part of this chapter to a temporary pause, and in order to introduce the reader to my practice, I ask them to engage now with a video titled *The End of Choreography*, which I propose here as an example of an expanded choreographic object of post-conceptual dance.[5]

1.3 Choreographing Spectatorship

I will now proceed to explore the centrality of spectatorship for this project on the expansion of the object.[6] Susan Bennett has argued in her book *Theatre Audiences* (1997) that theatre, and by extension contemporary artistic practice, is a combined system of production and reception. Taking this proposition as the basis of my argument I stress that the (heightened) relation between viewer and artwork, between subject and object, and the notion of spectatorship are central to reading this project. In this paradigm the attention shifts from the object of art to the audience of art, without

[5] *The End of Choreography* was commissioned by Bellyflop Magazine and presented at Chisenhale Dance Space on 23rd November 2013 and at TripSpace Projects on 14th December 2013. Please see Appendix 1 for the script of the video.

[6] The following text (until page 28) has been published in a different version elsewhere, please see for more details: Hildebrandt, A. (2012). (Me) Writing on Others – Towards an experiential methodology for the critical encounter with performance practice. In *Desearch*, Issue 2. Available at: http://www.desearch.co.uk/news_pages/mewriting-on-others-towards-an-experiential-methodology-for-the-criticalencounter-with-performance-practice-by-antje-hildebrandt-1419.html#.UnAUhaXKpBU [Accessed 29 October 2013].

neglecting the fact that the object has to be present in the first place for the engagement to function. The implication and position of the viewer (spectator or audience) has also been the subject of many theatre and performing arts practices. This is not surprising when we consider the spectators' fundamental and central position in any kind of performance as one that structures the (dynamic) relationship between performer and spectator. In the second half of the 20th century in particular, interactivity and participation have been key terms in the performing as well as the visual arts.[7]
The following examples demonstrate the breadth of art practices that are directly concerned with their relationship to the audience as they expand ideas about the ontology of art objects. Drawing on a variety of art genres, my aim is to give a brief overview of selected examples and moments in time in order to introduce the reader to those iconic art works that have particularly influenced my thinking on art practice in this research project.

In traditional theatrical theory Bertolt Brecht's 'Epic Theatre' uses the technique of alienation to distance the spectator from the performance through the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation or distancing effect), so that she/he becomes aware of her/his social situation. More recent examples in theatre are the performances of British contemporary theatre company Forced Entertainment, operating under the direction of Tim Etchells, who often positions the viewer as witness or voyeur. The work of this prominent

[7] Arguably, the notion of 'viewers as producers' (Bishop, 2006, p.10) was perceived as more radical when it entered the visual arts sector, which has been based on an economy of objects for most of its history, whereas the live performing arts, such as music, theatre and dance, have always primarily dealt with human subjects and their relationships to each other.

company has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Helmer & Malzacher, 2004; Etchells, 1999).

In music, John Cage, one of the most influential composers of the 20th century, wrote his well-known piece of music titled *4'33"* in 1952. In the piece, which is written in three movements for any instrument or combination thereof, the performer(s) are instructed not to play their instrument(s) for its duration. With his 'silent music', Cage strips the performance down to the context and the environment in which it exists, drawing attention to the experience of the listener and to the noise around her/him, suggesting that this can be read as music as well. Nick Kaye writes that '[*4'33"*] explicitly rejects the notion of the self-contained, self-sustained "object" and redraws the work of art as an occasion or event marked out by a self-reflexive attention or receptivity' (1994, p.93). The work uncovers the inherent instability of any work of art, showing that it relies on the attitude and intention of the viewer.

In the genre of Performance Art, Yoko Ono's seminal *Cut Piece* (1964), instructed individual spectators to come on stage and cut off all her clothes with a pair of scissors, while she remained in a passive position. Here, the act of cutting can be seen as both a violent, aggressive and exposing act but also as a form of present – a gift from Ono to her spectators as they took away with them an actual piece of Ono's clothes. Another well-known historical example that dealt with the notions of 'exchange' was Marina Abramović's *Rhythm O* (1974), in which she presented her audience with a

table of seventy-two objects (including objects that cause pleasure and pain, and a gun), which they were invited to apply to her body in any way they wanted for the duration of six hours. In this legendary work, Abramović risked her life but also questioned the spectator's relationship to her body and the power dynamic between spectator and performer. Here, the spectator took all the responsibility for the course of the performance. A more recent example is British Live Artist Kira O'Reilly, who took a more subtle approach when she gave audience members the opportunity to cut her skin in a one-to-one performance situation. This made apparent the complicated relationship arising out of a situation in which social and moral conduct and personal dilemmas became explicit through the minimal yet profound action of cutting another person's skin (*Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter,* 2003).

These examples demonstrate French philosopher Jacques Rancière's position in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), the title of both a specific text and a collection of writings that he developed and presented as talks and articles between 2004 and 2008. Rancière argues that from the moment we enter into this world, we are already active and engaged as participants in life; we therefore do not need to be emancipated, activated or awoken from a passive state. He writes; '[b]eing a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see with what we have seen and said, done and dreamed' (2009, p.17). For Rancière '[t]he spectator also acts […]. She observes, selects, compares,

and interprets' (2009, p.13) and thus transforms and reconfigures the world around her.[8]

The capacity and potential of spectator emancipation is integral to Rancière's notion of dissensual democracy, the opposition to consensus that is the basis of neo-liberal democracy, in favour of disagreement and conflict. Ross Birrell claims that 'Rancière's insistence on a "community of equals" based on an "equality of intelligence" holds important implications for undertaking and understanding the potential of "artistic research"'(2008, online). Birell refers to the assumption that both artist and viewer take an equally important part in the creation of the artwork, a situation in which the artist does not claim superiority in knowledge over others and where a redistribution of knowledge can take place. Rancière, furthermore, points out the complex relations between contemplation and action: 'There is no straight way from looking at a spectacle to understanding the state of the world, no straight way from intellectual awareness to political action' (2006, online). However, what artistic research can offer at its best is a shift from the known to the unknown, a shift that might point towards different ways of understanding and relating to each other and the world.

[8] The recognition that one does not necessarily need to physically involve the spectator in the artwork is a principle that I have explored in my practice, yet or even because my practice is often concerned with the relationship between performer and spectator. Whether one is physically participating in an artwork or merely contemplation actions on stage is not a question of value but simply one of method. As Ranciere suggests it is more useful to dissolve this binary and look for multiple ways of engagement that perform various functions depending on the context.

So far I have sought to establish the importance of spectatorship within artistic, and particularly performance practice, arguing that to watch or to look, which is the defining role of the spectator, is an active doing and there must be multiple processes of interaction in all kinds of artistic production, whether it is in theatre, dance, or art. Renee van de Vall reinforces this ontological position of art when she states: 'All art, classical and modern, is "interactive" in the sense that it requires the active imaginative and cognitive involvement of the recipient' (2008, p.140). The viewer is appropriating works for herself and automatically makes meaning of them. Participation in this way becomes 'relational' by emphasising the position that the viewer occupies. The act of placing the spectator at the centre of attention can change, enhance or distract from the individual experience of the work. This unusual situation can heighten consciousness and might result in embarrassment on behalf of the spectator. These difficult and uncomfortable situations might open up spaces and help to understand the nature and potential of dialogue, a notion that is closely related to the aesthetic experience. Adrian Heathfield suggests that '[d]ialogue proceeds in the miss as much as the hit, in the passing over and turning away, in refusal and sometimes most testily in silence, which is not to be mistaken for non-communication' (2009, p.47). The object of communication expands here into silence, a point that I have made earlier with the example of John Cage's *4'33".*

This research project, then, is invested in performance (whether live or recorded) as a place where the creative relationship between spectator and

performer is acknowledged and, at points, made explicit. This should not be read as a ‘participatory’ or ‘emancipating’ move but rather as referencing an already existing condition. In a practice which deals with the notion of performance, seeing and being seen must be the fundamental structuring condition, since without the audience there would be no performance in the first place. Fundamentally, the idea of the audience lies at the heart of performance and art practice and expands its function from the self-contained object to the possibility of producing many objects.

This shift from the object of art to the audience of art also has a political dimension, as there is a more immediate potential for transformation during the event for both spectator and performer. This is achieved most effectively when a particular object of art (performance, event, encounter) is not seen in the context of an improving or educational activity, but as a place of change. The underlying rationale is a belief in the ability of the expanded object (of dance, performance, art) to challenge and question, to trigger and provoke thought, to destabilise society, ultimately leading to personal and potentially even political change. The act of participating, then, is a political act of empowerment; taking part in something (a performance, an election) means to have agency and the opportunity to act, to react, to interact, to ‘make a move’ and change the situation through participation. This translation of art into society might not always happen on a physical level but, more importantly, in our minds. Helen Freshwater points out this connection between participation and empowerment:

> Our sense of the proper, or ideal, relationship between theatre and its audiences can illuminate our hopes for other models of social

> interaction, clarifying our expectations of community, democracy and citizenship, and our perception of our roles and power (or lack of) within the broader public sphere. (2009, p.3)[9]

Exactly what 'other models of interaction' Freshwater is referring to remains unclear. However, if we can understand that in the theatre and in the exhibition situations are constructed (or staged) for us, art then carries the potential to disrupt, thus making us aware of the power that we, as spectators and participants, have over the construction of our own lives. I argue that artistic production in itself (as well as its discourse) can initiate and activate certain public spheres, as I will demonstrate with the examples of one work by Xavier Le Roy and Mårten Spångberg and one work by Tino Sehgal. I claim that these choreographers/artists exercise an expanded dance practice, which involves working with participants and engaging visitors in the space of the gallery.

The imperative that, as visitors to an exhibition, we are responsible for our actions was undoubtedly the guiding agenda behind the *MOVE - Choreographing You* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery (London), which was curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. If you visited the gallery between October 2010 and January 2011, as I did, you may have encountered *Production* by French choreographer Xavier Le Roy and Swedish

[9] The relationship between theatre and its audience is a preoccupation in this thesis but what I perceive is at the very heart of this quote is actually a more open question that concerns the role and purpose of art in society. Is art here for us to make 'a better world', to make us more aware, to instigate change? Is art a reactive or active force, does it only reflect or can it project solutions and inspire ideas not yet thought? These questions are both at the very core of this thesis, and my practice, and go well beyond it. I quote Freshwater here, as she seems to be pointing towards both the limitation and the potential of art and the multiple relationships that theatre and art might have with their audiences.

writer/choreographer/performer/curator Mårten Spångberg. It is equally probable that you may have missed it. With no specific performance time scheduled or announced, the work acts as an intervention-performance event with a team of dancer-participants. The participants, scattered around the gallery, rehearse movements of their own choice from iconic works of post-modern dance on their smartphones. As soon as a viewer stops to take a closer look at what they are doing, the participants pause their dancing and directly ask the viewers questions along the lines of 'What are you looking for?' or 'Can I help you?' What follows this small ritual of interaction depends on the participation of the viewer(s). The encounters are meant to initiate conversations and discussions about dance, the exhibition, choreography, or life and work in general. The project can be seen as a provocation to the usual situation viewers find themselves in when visiting an exhibition, as it exposes and questions their immediate relationship to art and dance. Instead of 'passively' being allowed to look at an art object, they are directly addressed and forced to acknowledge, defend and evaluate their position as viewers.

However, what might at first appear as a harsh denial of spectatorship, with the possibility of leading to embarrassment, is indeed an opportunity for exchange, as it offers the possibility to the viewer to choose, decide and channel their desires and expectations of the encounter with the art object through the dancer-participant. There will be no more dancing, but the participants will talk about anything with the visitors; their bodies are created, not by movement, but by communication. Notice the difference between the

question ‘What are you looking for?’ and ‘What are you looking at?’ One sees a shift in the role of the gallery visitor; the future visitor will not be a ‘receptive entity but instead an agent who exercises creative and responsible influence over the work’ (Sehgal in von Hantelmann, 2007, p.192). Using the medium of dance, Le Roy and Spångberg are able to initiate a conversation about the act of looking, therefore subverting the usual role of the visitor in the gallery. *Production* practices a critique of the object in a two-fold way, expanding both the art object as well as the object of dance.

French curator and theorist Nicolas Bourriaud’s theory of Relational Art remains an important historical reference for thinking about art, participation and spectatorship in this context. Bourriaud is interested in visual art practices and perceives the concept of Relational Art as ‘a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context’, therefore defining the title of his book *Relational Aesthetics* as an ‘aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt’ (2002, p.112-113). In other words, the question that can and should be asked when engaging with an artwork is one of co-existence: ‘Does this art work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines?’ (ibid, p.109) By approaching the observer with a possible exchange by dialogue, this dialogue can become a social exchange; the relational artist endeavours to ‘repair’ a lack of connections and develops tools for bringing people together to create social bonds (Sörenson, 2008).

Although urbanisation has brought people together, by way of increasing the possibility of social exchange because of decreased proximity, in the current culture of cash machines, self-checkout and TV, machines carry out tasks that once represented opportunities for human exchange (Bourriaud, 2002). In Relational Art, works are produced with regards to their relational value and not simply for consumption; the 'artwork's form is spreading out from its material form' (ibid, p.21). It can therefore be argued that both the performing arts and relational art as social practices usually omit material objects altogether and instead 'only' produce ephemeral encounters, meetings and experiences. It is in the actual and temporal engagement with the 'object of performance' (Sayre, 1989) that meanings are constructed, deconstructed and re-combined.

British-German artist Tino Sehgal's works can be seen as examples of how an expanded choreographic practice can operate in the visual art context, as opposed to the theatre. In *This objective of that object* (2004) the viewer enters a room where Sehgal's five 'interpreters' (a term he uses to imply the purpose and role of those people involved who are rarely trained performers but instead carefully selected members of the local public) stand with their faces to the wall. They start half-singing, half-whispering the phrase 'The objective of this work is to be the object of a discussion', gradually getting louder, before falling back into silence. At this point, the piece can develop in several ways, depending on the visitor's actions. Whenever another visitor enters the space, the procedure starts from the beginning. If no one replies, the interpreters slowly fall to the floor. If the visitor responds verbally, for

example by asking a question, the interpreters start a discussion and the potential for a dialogue arises. The structure of *This objective of that object* allows the visitors to have the responsibility and the power to influence the work in a significant way. Even if this sometimes fails on a practical level, the conceptual proposition is clear: no dialogue – no art. The viewer is asked to take part in the work, to respond to a statement. If she/he refuses to act and remains silent, the artwork comes to an end; the interpreters symbolically 'die' and the piece is over. If, however, the visitor asks a clear question, the interpreters will start a discussion amongst themselves.

My first personal experience of Sehgal's work took place in July 2011 at Manchester Art Gallery, where I encountered *Ann Lee* (2010). Together with approximately fifteen other people, I entered a small white cube, which was completely empty. A few minutes later a young girl, who was approximately thirteen years old, entered the room. Facing a wall of her choice she started telling us how she was first two-dimensional, then three-dimensional and how she is now trying to exist in the fourth dimension with the help of 'Tino'. Her voice was monotonous, her slow and controlled movements robotic yet fluent, her gaze calm and distant, never resting in one place. She appeared fragile and vulnerable, but then she directly addressed me with a question: 'Would you rather be too busy or not busy enough?' Silence. I said, 'I would rather be too busy.' She asked 'Why?' I answered 'Because then I don't have time to think so much.' She said 'Interesting' and continued with her story. It is clear that the tables had turned; she was completely in control of the situation. The piece continued with her narrating a story and every so often

addressing someone with a question. At the end she quoted a long, complicated passage of philosophical text and then asked the person next to me ‘Do you know what it means?’ The question was, more often than not I imagine, answered with ‘No, I don’t’.

In both of Sehgal’s works described above, the participation of the viewer, through her/his voicing, is not only anticipated and desired but essential to the work; without this dialogue, or confrontation rather, the artwork does not exist. The implications of this kind of work are that the viewer might feel that she/he is put ‘on the spot’, left in a position where she/he feels uncomfortable, exposed and on display, as her/his presence is highlighted and questioned. Can I look at this person? How do I position myself in relationship to her, or to others? How do I talk to her? Am I responsible for her actions (or even her ‘death’)? What am I expected to say or do? In Sehgal’s works, the viewer is treated as an autonomous person with agency and his work demands viewers to take responsibility for their actions. As Sehgal explains: ‘[t]he viewer in my work is always confronted with him- or herself, with his or her own presence in the situation, as something that matters, as something that influences and shapes this situation’ (in Griffin, 2005, p.219).

However, the involvement of audience members is not enough if the art works aims to take a critical stance; instead the exchange must be carefully framed so that the interaction brings about awareness of the pleasures and discomforts that play out in these relations. Catherine Wood, Curator of

Contemporary Art and Performance at Tate Modern, sharply observes, '[Sehgal's] work [isn't] naively optimistic about the pleasure of participation; he scores a razor-sharp path between the popular notion of "interactivity" and the discomfort of alienation' (2005, online). It might be the case that by feeling alienated, and somehow removed, a gap emerges between a certain situation (the aesthetic experience) and our perception of this situation. We start to understand the rules and structures within which we exist (that is 'How the system is constructed and works'), and as participants we become aware of the faults, limits and boundaries in the system and our potential (or lack of) power to change it. For example, Sehgal's inclusion and incorporation of children and gallery assistants in his earlier pieces *This is Good* (2001), *This is So Contemporary* (2005) and *This Success/This Failure* (2007) are a move towards highlighting and drawing attention to those people normally invisible in the privileged space of art. By giving these individuals a task that replaces their normal 'doing' he draws attention to the often-invisible subjects around the art object and subtly subverts the operating systems of the gallery. I argue then that his works produce questions that expand the object beyond its material manifestation as he integrates the production of discursive encounters, not as reactions after the work has finished but into the heart of his artistic practice.

I have sought to demonstrate in the theoretical and practical examples above that it seems unavoidable to consider the notion of participation (explicit or implicit) when thinking about spectatorship and current performing and visual art practices. My own practice as well as the practice of other artists that I

engage with in this thesis understands performance/art/dance as an encounter between spectator/viewer and performer/art object that depends on the participation and negotiation between the elements in order to function as an exchange.

1.4 The Live Object

The preoccupation with spectatorship/viewership is closely related to other reoccurring themes in this project, namely the expansion of the object, and concerns the complex relationship between liveness, presence and time as well as documentation and archive. How can one document, or rather represent, an art form (in this case dance) that is said to escape and resist documentation, that places emphasis on the qualities of presence and ephemerality? Phelan proposed in her famous essay on the ontology of performance: 'performance honours the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward' (1993, p.149). Her argument that performances' only life is in the present and cannot therefore be reproduced, represented or documented is an important reference point for me in this project, yet I also strive to problematise the effects (aesthetically and politically) that this position has upon dance as an art form.

Michel Foucault defined the archive as 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (1972, p.130). Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the so-called 'living archive' of the body is widely acknowledged and valued, particularly in performance-related disciplines.

Amelia Jones writes that ‘it is through memory that we connect with the world around us’ (2012, p.15). Performance questions the exclusivity of such actions like remembering and forgetting and presents them as mutually dependent on each other. Rebecca Schneider (2001) has argued in response to Phelan’s statement on the ontology of performance that performance does *not* disappear precisely because our memory of it remains and this makes the performance reappear in different contexts and at different times and places. Philip Auslander has stated in his seminal book *Liveness* (1999) that live and mediatised performances depend on each other and one does not precede the other. He argues that (live) performance is never unmediated in the first place because live experience, documentation and (critical) reception become indistinguishable from each other as they interconnect in different instances of thought. Therefore, being *there* is not always dependent on being present and being in and of the moment. Presence today is complicated through technology and he takes a critical stance on the magical and energetic exchanges that supposedly takes place during a live performance. One might ask then, is making live performance really such a radical form of resistance?

The ever-present and often discussed issue of performance documentation, seen in this way, is extending the live moment (the life of a performance) as opposed to representing a lack or filling a void. This notion implies that it is more useful to think of the present as something that expands, which does not just exist in this moment, here and now. The past is then also always in the becoming and not a collection of (stable) facts. Adrian Heathfield

describes this merging of past, present and future that is so typical of performance practices well: ‘Eventhood allows spectators to live for a while in the paradox of two impossible desires: to be *present* in the moment, to savour it, and to *save* the moment, to still and preserve its power long after it has gone’ (2004, p.9, emphasis in the original). It is for exactly this reason that live performance demands from us an involvement that goes beyond the moment of the event. Performance artist Augusto Corrieri has written about performance as ‘a piece of fiction: it never truly takes place, except in the minds of the spectators. It remains unfulfilled, something that is yet to happen. It doesn’t fully exhaust itself by appearing’ (2006, online). And yet, it is exactly dance’s persistence that turns out to be its major strength as Lepecki writes, ‘[the] insistence on returning with a difference, the ethics of persisting while facing the demands of absence, constitutes dance’s particular affective-political force within the broader field of contemporary art’ (2012, p.16).

1.5 From Here until the End

I have argued in this first chapter that post-conceptual dance operates currently within an expanded field, in which dancers and choreographers are continuing to push against the boundaries of their art form in order to (re)claim dance’s position within the artistic field, making dance relevant to a wider artistic, cultural, political and social context. Lepecki’s notion of dance as ‘exhausted’ (2005), in a sense that it no longer requires continuous movement to define itself as dance and Rancière’s concept of the ‘emancipated spectator’ (2009), in which he argues for thinking about an

audience as already active and involved in a continuous process of meaning-making, is integral to the way I approach both practice and theory in this project.

In Chapter 2, I will bring forth the idea of the post-conceptual choreographer as spectator. By doing so the choreographer (myself) withdraws from the activity of 'making' to concentrate on the act of viewing and reflecting on another artist's work. I do so in order to further explore the complex relationship between experiencing and producing, between seeing and making, and what these notions might mean in a practice-based research project. The tensions, challenges and opportunities that come out of this relationship therefore constitute integral aspects of my project on expanded choreographic practice. In this specific instance, I seek to contextualise the work of Croatian collaborative performance collective BADco., a collective of eight core members coming from a diversity of backgrounds such as dance, choreography, dramaturgy, computer programming, philosophy and political theory, which was founded in Zagreb in 2000. Their working ethos as 'collective' and interdisciplinary is reflected in the diversity of projects that they create, such as theatrical performances, installations and publications. In my writing I specifically deal with their performance *Memories Are Made of This...Performance Notes* (2006), which I experienced at Chelsea Theatre (London) on 8th November 2008. By doing so I will perform an act of double exposure: Firstly, I expose myself by describing a personal experience of a performance that I felt intrigued, but also exposed by. Secondly, I discuss the potential(s) of 'inserting' One to One encounters and their aftermaths into a

formal theatrical framework by paying careful attention to the complex relationship between spectator and performer. Within this proposed framework, I will consider concepts such as intimacy, as proposed by writer and academic Rachel Zerihan. I will explore the problematic dynamics and ethical implications that arise from this unusual performance situation. What happens when collective and singular spectatorship meet in one performance?

Collective and singular modes of spectating are also at stake in Chapter 3 where I discuss *These associations* (2012) by Tino Sehgal, which was commissioned as the 13th, and final, artwork of the Unilever Series and performed, or rather installed, in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall between July and October 2012. In my writing I use the role of the participant to demonstrate how a post-conceptual choreographer might engage with her/his practice not as the creator of her/his own work, but as a participant in another artist's work. I will frame my being in someone else's work as a double privilege of 'having been there', not only as an observer, a spectator, a visitor, a viewer or an onlooker of the work but also as a participant in the work. I am speaking here from 'inside' the art object. From this position, I will argue that Sehgal's work plays with a quadruple denial of the art object. Firstly, he denies his work the status of 'dance', as it circulates within a visual art context. Secondly, he denies his work the status of 'object' and therefore confuses the boundaries of object and subject. Thirdly, he denies any clear distinction between reality and fiction, which brings out a tension between authenticity and artificiality within the work. Lastly, and most importantly for

my argument, by refusing to document his work, Sehgal responds to the inevitable difficulty of representing an art object. Instead, he relays the representation to reproducible human relations and interactions that actually produce, and exceed, the work. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that Sehgal is an example of a post-conceptual choreographer who, through and because of his various denials, exercises an expanded dance practice, even though he might not call himself a choreographer and despite the fact that, or *precisely because*, his work operates exclusively in the economy of production and reception of the art gallery.

In Chapter 4, I will transition from spectator (Chapter 2) and participant (Chapter 3) to 'maker' as I examine the denial of dancing and the expansion of choreographic performance practice more closely. I will discuss my project titled *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo*, which was performed in June 2012 and April 2013 and now exists as a video work, and introduce choreography as the practice of editing. As the project is preoccupied with the relationship between humans and technology it asks where meaning resides – in the body, in between bodies, in the voice, in gestures, in words, in spoken or written language, in movement language, in languages of the body. I will expand on ideas concerning the shifting role of the choreographer from author to editor, the dancer as copyist, performance as a 'catching-up' in time and place and the implications of understanding choreography as a theoretical, as well as practical, field of study. These ideas tie back in with the overall argument of this thesis which aims to understand post-conceptual

dance as an expanded practice that not necessarily involves the conventional object of dance: dancing.

In Chapter 5, I will use the figure of the collector to displace the role of the choreographer. I will do so by contextualising a project I undertook between October 2012 and March 2014 titled *Screen Tests*, which took the form of a live performance in a theatre, a live performance in a gallery and which now exists in different formats as a collection of videos works. The multiple manifestations of this project problematise the notion of the artwork, questioning what impact context has on the reading and the meaning of a work. The *Screen Tests* project asks how an artwork could be produced, positioned and viewed as a dynamic, fluid, mobile process rather than a fixed and stable object. I will therefore argue that my videos are complicating notions of objecthood, documentation, liveness and the very idea of the singularly authored original artwork. The choreographed short films are questioning what it means to be (a)live, to be oneself, to be present(ed), to be with (and in front of) others and a camera. Through the figure of the collector I will argue for an expanded understanding of the notion of authorship, spectatorship and documentation, and ultimately, for choreography and dance as an expanded performance practice.

Chapter 6 is concerned with addressing issues of ephemerality, documentation, archive, history and memory, which are core concerns for 'preserving' dance and securing its future. In this chapter, I will propose thinking about choreographers and dancers, in their expanded roles, as 're-

framers' who absorb, store and disseminate knowledge through their bodies. The chapter seeks to articulate the argument by discussing one dance in particular: *Trio A* (1966) by Northern American choreographer and film-maker Yvonne Rainer, a seminal, well known and often discussed solo from the era of post-modern dance, that continues to perform its legacy in the bodies of dancers. I will think through the characteristics of the piece (the task-like activity, the 'non-performance', the denial of the gaze, the continuity of movement and the issue of documentation) by contextualising my video work titled *Learning about the 60s*, developed in March 2012, which critically interrogates the performative realities of the iconic piece. I will argue that *Trio A*'s meaning depends upon its actualisation in time and place and this changes depending on the cultural, social, political and economic contexts that the piece 'lives in or through'. It should therefore not be fixed, cast in stone and validated by the canon in this way. Instead it is imperative that we see the piece as marked by absence(s) and residing in the bodies and minds of its subjects.

In this thesis then, I will trace the permutation from choreographer to spectator, participant, editor, collector, 're-framer', and finally curator (in lieu of a conclusion), arguing for the multiplicity of roles that choreographers, and by extension dancers, take on through their practice. Although each chapter relates to one of these roles specifically, the intention is to use the terms in a non-exclusive and flexible way, as definitions overlap, interconnect and communicate with each other across the chapters. The interdisciplinary research undertaken for this project will draw from a variety of discourses

including performance theory, visual cultures and critical theory, and is therefore both relevant to the field of dance studies and beyond the discipline. The project resides in the gaps and tensions between practice and theory, performance and documentation, language and dance, text and movement, choreography and objecthood. I will move between these different fields, conventions and terminologies, and as one of the conclusions of the project, I hold that the gaps between the different discourses are not as wide as suspected if we consider post-conceptual dance as an expanded choreographic performance practice.

2. The Choreographer as Spectator: Experiencing BADco.'s *Memories Are Made of This…*

In this chapter, the idea of the post-conceptual choreographer as spectator is examined. By doing so, the choreographer (myself) withdraws from the activity of 'making' to concentrate on the act of viewing. I do so in order to further explore the complex relationship between experiencing and producing, between seeing and making, and what these notions might mean in a practice-based research project. The tensions, challenges and opportunities that come out of this relationship therefore constitute integral aspects of my project on expanded choreographic practice. I have already discussed the centrality of spectatorship to the overall project in the first chapter and the aim of this second chapter is to continue this engagement, not yet through observation of my own practice, but by contextualising the work of Croatian collaborative performance collective BADco., more specifically their performance *Memories Are Made of This...Performance Notes* (2006), based on my experience of it at Chelsea Theatre (London) on 8th November 2008. In line with the overall argument of this thesis, I will advocate for the expanded roles which choreographers of post-conceptual dance might take on, including the choice to not only deny the conventional object of dance (dancing), but also to deny the activity of creating an object (a choreography, a dance) at all. In this chapter, it is my working through the experience of the witnessed performance by BADco. that constitutes my 'practice' as choreographer. This choreographic practice expands here into the act of thinking and writing about another artist's work. The practice of

writing is therefore used as another tool to extend my work as a choreographer, a methodology that concerns the whole of this practice-led research project, which comprises both artistic and scholarly activities.

In this chapter then, I will discuss my specific personal and subjective experience and memory of the performance in relation to the complex relationship between spectator and performer more generally. Within this framework, I will consider concepts such as intimacy and exposure as possible effects that can develop from this relationship. I will explore and expose some of the ethics, dynamics and possible problems that arise from an unusual performance situation and what happens when collective and singular spectatorship meet in one performance.[10]

The fact that I write about this piece six years after experiencing it, evokes a paradox that the title of the performance hints at: that memory is as much about forgetting as it is about remembering, and that this condition is emblematic of the theatrical experience in general. Furthermore, the use of 'programme notes' in the title of the piece points to the fact that these 'notes' function both as a relict of the performance as well as a document designed to be read prior to the beginning of the performance. They exist in an ambiguous two-fold way and therefore represent a reminder to the not yet realised possibilities of interpretation and experience in the theatre. I

[10] This chapter has been published in a different version elsewhere, please see for more details: Hildebrandt, A. (2013). The Intimated Spectator: One to One encounters in BADco.'s 'Memories Are Made of This...'. In *Activate*, 2(2). Available at: http://www.thisisactivate.net/thisisac_roeham/2013/06/06/the-intimated-spectator-one-to-one-encounters-in-badco-s-memories-are-made-of-this/ [Accessed 26 September 2014].

therefore present my experience here not as a closed, whole or linear reading of the performance but as a process for remembering and forgetting as I recall fragmented moments and situations during the performance that have, without a doubt, changed meaning over time.

2.1 Practising Spectatorship

As part of the public performance of *Memories Are Made of This…* I was singled out to take part in a somewhat 'privileged' experience of two one-to-one encounters that were integrated into a ninety-minute formal theatre piece. By the term 'one-to-one' I am referring to a performance situation that involves the presence of only one performer and one spectator, and that by 'formal theatre piece' I am pointing at a more 'traditional' or 'conventional' theatrical situation in which a group of people (the audience) watches a smaller group of other people (the performers) do things. Zerihan asserts that 'the one-to-one performance format cultivates an especially intensive relationship in which an intimate exchange of dialogue between performer and spectator can take place' (2006, online).

BADco.'s performances generally steer away from the use of a proscenium arch (the classical fourth wall). In this particular piece the main auditorium of Chelsea Theatre was transformed into a horizontal performance space by placing five big tables for five audience members each to sit around in the area normally reserved for the performers. On each table there was a dedicated performer, a radio and a photocopy of F. Scott Fitzgerald's essay collection *The Crack-Up* (on which the performance is loosely based). The

spatial non-separation of spectators and performers suggested a proximate relationship and possible interaction between the two, for any safety distance seemed to have been abandoned.

Memories Are Made of This… started in an unusual way. Sitting in the foyer/ café area reading the programme notes and waiting to be called into the auditorium, I missed the beginning of the show when I suddenly realised that the five members of the performance collective had 'invaded' the space. No three-minute call, no reminder to turn off the phone, no artificially manufactured darkness, no anonymity. In the short 'introduction' that followed we were invited to join the performers in the two gallery spaces as they explained that they wanted to expand the walls to make a bigger space and put fake grass on the floor so that we 'could all sit down and have a picnic'. As this was happening, one of the performers came up to me and asked if I was available for an interview. Slightly perplexed, I agreed and he led me upstairs into the theatre space on my own. The space was prepared for the performance and two technicians were making last minute adjustments (or so I thought; maybe they were not technicians but performers and they were performing). We sat down at a table and he asked me several questions: to describe a place in as much detail as possible, what I would do with this (the theatre) space if I could change it; he asked me to define boredom and to remember a situation when I was bored and describe what I would do in this situation. Lastly, he asked me how I would feel if I walked into a completely empty space. He recorded all of my answers on an

MP3 player and, as the rest of the audience began to enter the space, he told me that we would have to finish now.

Once everyone was seated the performance properly began. All I can remember now, six years later, are whispers, fragments of (improvised) dancing, incidental music playing from the radio, text being spoken, noise on the screens and, towards the end, dancing and simultaneous speaking in a language that I did not understand (Croatian?). What I do remember is that about ten minutes into the performance the same performer who had interviewed me in the beginning repeated my answers in front of the rest of the audience whilst having a dialogue with another performer, using the MP3 player and headphones.

The second one-to-one encounter I experienced happened some time later, approximately halfway through the performance, when the same performer who had approached me the first time asked me: ‘Can I show you something?’ and led me backstage and then ‘onstage’ again. Sitting next to each other on a small podium, which was sectioned off from the main stage with only two curtains separating us from the rest of the audience, he asked me to listen to sounds and text from his headphones and showed me a small ‘hand-dance’ performed on top of his knees.

Before I begin with my reading of the performance, it is necessary to outline the context for my analysis and to explain how I approach the relationship between performer and spectator. German curator Florian Malzacher argues

that audiences are increasingly asked 'to relate texts and images to themselves, to make connections between often disparate elements, to supplement what they've seen and heard on stage in order to make their own stories' (2004, p.123). Malzacher sees the audience as 'activated and empowered' (ibid) as they take responsibility themselves for what they see.

As an emancipated contemporary theatre piece, BADco.'s *Memories Are Made of This...* is therefore an effective illustration of Rancière's ideas in *The Emancipated Spectator*. Rancière depicts an audience of 'spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the "story" and make it their own story' (2009, p.22). In other words: 'she composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her' (ibid, p.13). His concept departs from traditional theatrical theory, for example Brecht's 'Epic Theatre', where the spectator has to be distanced from the performance through the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect) to become aware of his social situation, and Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', where the spectator has to be drawn directly into the performance. Relating the idea of the emancipated spectator to the post-conceptual choreographer, one sees how activities such as watching (and therefore interpreting), and not only the production of artistic objects, also exercise thought and partake in the expansion of performance practice.

The move from the production of artistic objects to the production of social relations (between artist and viewer, but also between viewers themselves) is a key idea in Bourriaud's theory of *Relational Aesthetics*, in which he

describes form in contemporary artistic practice in terms of relations or encounters between people and/or things. His statement ‘Art is a state of encounter’ (2002, p.8) suggests that this approach is not only used in theatre and performance practice, with its main concern in people rather than materials, but also in a set of artistic practices that Bourriaud calls ‘Relational Art’ and which he defines as ‘a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context’ (ibid, p.113). He proposes that hereby the ‘other’ (or spectator) is presupposed in the art-making process.

Extrapolating this idea to the performance situation, the performer is informed about herself through her interactions with the spectator and vice-versa. It could be argued then that BADco.’s *Memories Are Made of This…* is intrinsically ‘formal’ in Bourriaud’s sense of the word, as it is founded on encounters between people even if it is rejecting ‘traditional’ or ‘conventional’ modes of spectatorship. The act of placing audience members around a communal table, for example, suggests a relational face-to-face, rather than a frontal side-by-side relationship between performers and spectators.

Memories Are Made of This… specifically, but BADco.’s entire body of work in general, represents an approach to performance-making that understands theatre as an exchange between spectator and performer, with the performer presenting something that depends on the participation of the audience in order to function as an exchange. This allows both spectator and performer to become recognised as unique individuals in the situation. This exchange

was made explicit on several levels in the two one-to-one encounters I experienced in *Memories are Made of This....*

Firstly, without my participation the performer would not have been able to present *his* material, which indeed was *my* material in the first place. Furthermore, one can see a second exchange in the relationship between the first and the second one-to-one encounter. In the first situation, I gave him something of myself when I revealed details about my bedroom (one of the most intimate spaces, one could argue) and other private secrets to him (for instance, what I do in situations of boredom). In the second situation, he gave me something of himself in return, a kind of 'thank you', a gift or token, even if it 'just' meant sharing a few minutes together looking at his hands and knees. The difference is that I did not dare lie to him when answering the questions (I suppose I may have lied had the questions been more personal) but he, on the other hand, was clearly 'performing' for me.

The feeling of exposure and betrayal, when he repeated my answers, given to him in a private moment, to the whole audience, was later met with a feeling of being 'special', as if I was the only one experiencing the intimate and unique moment of the 'hand-dance'. Again, it is important to mention that the contract between performer and spectator is a socially and culturally constructed one in which one would not expect to hear one's own answers, given in privacy, repeated to a large group of people. By breaking this contract BADco. are questioning the realities of the social codes and behaviours that not only exist inside the theatre but also outside of it.

There is an implication that we are always engaged in relationships with others, whether we find ourselves in social or theatrical realities. One could, or should ask, how much are performers responsible for their audience? One could argue that the manipulation I experienced hinders or limits an audience in their reading of the performance. However, what remains in my memory of the performance is a feeling of privilege and, at the same time, isolation. As far as I know I was the only one experiencing the performance in this way. Why did he choose me? Did I appear particularly open, friendly or interested? Did I just happen to stand in his proximity? Was it a coincidence? Was it a choice? I will never know.

The idea of incorporating one-to-one performance into a formal theatre setting is an interesting one, yet one that requires special consideration for some of the facts surrounding theatrical spectatorship. Theatre scholar Alan Read writes in his book *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*:

> There is, in the act of theatre, the performer, the audience and you, and it is this tripartite, dialectical nature that demands distinct responses from the ensuing event. That event is quite different when undertaken between a performer and 'you' alone, entering the religious, the ritual and the therapeutic. (1993, p.94)

I agree with Read's argument, as I believe it is a very different experience of spectatorship if one is implicated in a one-to-one performance situation, than when watching an event together with other people. As Belgian researcher Frank Coppieters notes when examining audience perception, 'one's attitude toward/perception of/relationship with the rest of the public is an important

factor in one's theatrical experience' (in Bennett, 1997, p.91). I would add to Read's interpretation that my encounter would not only enter what he calls the religious, ritual and therapeutic but also the confessionary, which is made explicit through my interview at the beginning of the piece.

When analysing *Memories Are Made of This…* it becomes clear that what is at stake are different ideas around space and place in relation to notions of privacy, intimacy, public, exposure and distance. More specifically, BADco. question what role space and place play in one-to-one encounters within a collective performance set-up. They explore and expose boundaries between public and private spaces, as I will try to illustrate by way of three examples. Firstly, most of the questions in the interview were concerned with notions of space or place. Secondly, when the performer led me backstage it was clear to me that we were entering a different, more intimate, space in comparison to the 'space for the public', the auditorium. For this occasion the 'conventional' expectations of a 'formal' auditorium were 'displaced' as he lead me to a place behind the scene. Thirdly, when we were sitting 'onstage', separated from the rest of the audience only by two curtains, it felt as if I was experiencing a completely different, more private, world to the fast-moving 'onstage' world on the other side of the curtains.

After having had such an intimate moment with 'my' performer, on two separate occasions, I then had to share him with the rest of the audience for the duration of the performance: I remember sensing a strange feeling of jealousy, usually only experienced with someone one loves. At the same

time I was longing for a sense of identity within the group, a place to belong, as I was in a strange position of *in-between-ness*: part of the audience, yet also (and secretly) part of the performance. It is in this desire to belong that I experienced intimacy in *Memories Are Made of This*…. I shall now define the type of intimacy that I mean.

2.2 The Intimacy of Exposure

Commonly, the word 'intimacy' is used to describe a close, familiar, and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person, usually reciprocal. I would add that normally one has an intimate relationship either with members of one's own family, good friends and/or one's partner. However, the intimacy that I am describing is a different kind of intimacy; it is an intimacy that is created with a stranger in a particular context and at a specific moment – a one-to-one performance situation. This kind of intimacy is similar to the one that Lauren Berlant describes in her book *Intimacy,* where she writes 'intimacy […] involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out a particular way' (2000, p.1).

I cannot say that my experience necessarily involved a desire for a shared narrative (or maybe it already is), yet I became more aware of myself and the others through the ever shifting and changing relationship between myself, the performer and the audience, as it unfolded in space and time. Zerihan describes the one-to-one performance experience, historically speaking a relatively new concept in performance practice, well: 'One to One

performance foregrounds subjective personal narratives that define - and seek to redefine - who we are, what we believe and how we act and re-act' (2006, online).

This desire to find our own identity is something that might not only be specific to one-to-one performance, but that can be found in theatre, and indeed life in general, as theatre scholar Nicholas Ridout suggests: 'there is something […] that takes place in the theatre that seems capable of activating in an audience a feeling of our compromised, alienated participation in the political and economic relations that make us appear to be who we are' (2006, p.93-94). Writer and director Tim Etchells perpetuates this thought: 'to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's place in them' (in Malzacher, 2004, p.125).

I experienced different kinds of intimacy in *Memories Are Made of This…*, one of which was vulnerability. For example, I remember one particular moment in the second one-to-one encounter which signified a turning point, a moment of rupture, in my experience: I became embarrassed. This happened not because the performer said or did something embarrassing, but because of a breakdown in communication. I did not understand his instruction and he, instead of repeating the instruction, decided to copy every single one of my movements until I followed my intuition and did what I thought I heard him say, which was to turn off the MP3 player. In this split second, which felt like ten minutes, both parties experienced a moment of

uncertainty and awkwardness. How would we get out of this situation? Ridout interprets this exact moment I experienced in *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems*: '[t]he theatre is all about appearing. [...] In moments of embarrassment [...] what is happening is that you are suddenly aware of being made to appear, of the fact that you have your being through your appearance' (2006, p.93). In other words, through my embodied realisation I became aware of the situation I was in: on my own, with a stranger, behind a curtain in a room full of people, unable to follow the 'line of action', feeling insecure, confused and uncomfortable because I did not know what was going to happen next.

The fear and the pleasure of singular spectatorship (one-to-one encounters) is the fear and pleasure of being singled out or feeling embarrassed in an intimate moment with an (unknown) person or being exposed in front of others. This situation becomes intensified for the person singled out when it is integrated into the notion of collective spectatorship, as 'the others' unknowingly bear witness to the event. There is always a sense that 'they' could become voyeurs in this situation, if they are not already, in case the intimated singular spectator is exposed as such. On the contrary, it might be true that, if the rest of the audience were unaware of my private encounters with the performer, I would be the 'insider', an advantaged co-conspirator, the knowing person who is keeping secrets from them. In retrospective, I could have been the voyeur, but in the moment of the performance I was so intensely engaged in negotiating my relation with the performer that I hardly realised the potential for observing 'the others' from my privileged position.

In conclusion, I would even argue that *Memories Are Made of This…* evokes tensions that fall into, or near, the categories of love and betrayal. Dance historian Ramsay Burt writes: '[t]he desire to be loved is the desire to be seen in great particularity, not just as anyone, or as another, or the other, or the Other; but as someone in particular who is quite unique and individual' (n.d., online). I believe it is this recognition of individual uniqueness and particularity that Burt speaks of that I experienced in *Memories Are Made of This…* I might have been the only one in the audience with this unsettling, yet pleasant, feeling of (un)fulfilled desire. If I had been another spectator I might have felt threatened or bored, I might have avoided or even refused the invitation by BADco.

Although my insider view contributes heavily to my experience of the piece, I might not have been so 'unique' as I initially thought, if we consider that in previous or future performances of the piece someone else occupied/will occupy my 'special' place. Since the intimate encounters were not improvised or spontaneous moments but part of a precise dramaturgy of the piece, I share my secret encounters with potential others whom I will never know, yet I know that they exist. By reading the one-to-one encounters from this point of view I might have performed a sort of double exposure. Not only had I naively exchanged confidences with a performer who 'used' my trusting intimacies for the benefit and enhancement of his show, but also I do not have any knowledge of what happened to the recordings once the show was over. It could have been that my responses were, or will be, played back in

subsequent performances, or documentation, without my knowing or being present.

Pushing this point further, I might have involuntarily contributed to the aftermath of the performance in an uncanny way, through a triple exposure. Others' and my experiences of witnessing may have been exploited by providing free marketing for the company and promoting the show through word of mouth. After all, the more 'buzz' a company creates for themselves and their work, the more press, and ticket sales, the performance generates. This can be said for all performance work since it thrives on legend and hearsay, but through the potential for anecdotes (of the secret encounters) this particular performance exemplifies the complex structures of dissemination that exist for performances' aftermath: oral histories, rumours, mystification, and 'official' written accounts of the work like this chapter in a thesis. What is left then for someone who does not experience the intimate one-to-one, for someone who came specifically for this reason? The fact that I can hardly remember anything about the performance apart from the private encounters tells us something about the power of personal address, not just in performance but also outside of the theatre.

Finally, the recognition that we are always one and many, part and whole, part of a group and individual, is a deeply social and political concern. What is playing out at the heart of all such relations with ourselves and with others, in the public and private sphere, are the tensions and negotiations between the desire to be seen, the fear of being exposed, and the longing to be

recognised and loved as we appear. The paradox of eliciting painful pleasure: memories are made of this….

3. The Choreographer as Participant: Attending to Tino Sehgal's *These associations*

In the previous chapter on my experience of BADco.'s *Memories Are Made Of This…* I have argued for the expanded role of the post-conceptual choreographer as spectator. In this chapter I will take the argument one step further and use the role of the participant as an exemplary position of how a post-conceptual choreographer might engage with her/his practice, not as the creator of his/her own work but as a participant in another artist's work. This writing then attends (and attests) to my personal experience of participating in another artist's project in the double sense of the word: it is both reflecting my being present in and after the immediate moment of engagement with the work as well as taking care of its documentation and dissemination in another form through these written words on a page (that is, my thesis). By doing so I deny the 'object' its self-contained singular character and expand the possibility of having multiple objects, one of which manifests itself here through this writing. In order to bring the reader closer to the experience of participating, I will begin with a closer description of the piece.

As a visitor to Tate Modern in London in the autumn of 2012, you might have had a curious, and multiple, experience. Upon entering the Tate from the bridge (ground floor) you could find yourself looking down into the Turbine Hall, where a large group of people were shifting around the space playing games. If you were a child, you might immediately recognise a game similar

to tag. If you were a person involved with dance, you could potentially recognise several movement tasks and group dynamic exercises, such as swarming and flocking. If you chose to come down from your bird's eye view, you could find yourself being approached by a person who would tell you a brief story about themselves or their life which, depending on your response, could develop into a longer conversation.

Upon entering the Turbine Hall from the ramp entrance you could find yourself being almost run over by the group running towards and passing you. Someone might stop and talk to you, breathlessly. If you were to stay for longer than twenty minutes, it is likely that you would have found the group gathering by the bridge, where they would sing a short song; some words that you could have made out were 'humans', 'nature' and 'technological age'. At other times you might find the group shouting 'electric' three times in a row whilst the light boxes flickered on and off. After that you might follow the group into the west wing of the hall where you would experience the group softly singing, whilst they stood or sat in small figurations in an atmospherically dimmed hall.

What I have described above is a work called *These associations* (2012) by Tino Sehgal, which was commissioned as the 13th, and final, artwork of the Unilever Series and which took place in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall between July and October 2012. During the entire opening hours of the museum a

group of approximately seventy people[11] from different age groups and backgrounds was involved in walking up and down the vast space at different speeds, playing various spatial games with each other, singing extracts of philosophical texts and talking to visitors about themes of belonging, arrival, dissatisfaction and satisfaction with themselves or their admiration for a person.

As one of those two hundred-fifty people involved in the project and as a doctoral research student, I am in a curious position: both deeply involved and immersed in the work, yet also striving to adopt a critical point of view. Having been involved in the project since August 2009, as an attendant in several of Sehgal's workshops at Tate Modern and later as a participant in the piece, I am speaking here from 'inside' the art object. From a methodological position I have the double privilege of 'having been there', not only as an observer, a spectator, a visitor, a viewer or an on-looker *of* the work but also as a participant *in* the work. My 'hybrid' position leads to me writing as participant in some sections and as spectator in others. For the reader this might appear confusing at times, particularly since the discussion alternates between participant-viewer experience and participant-art work experience. The intentional doubling of perspective seeks to question the very notion of objectivity and stability in artistic practice, and in aesthetic experience more generally.

[11] The whole project involved more than two hundred-fifty people, who had been selected by Sehgal and his producer Asad Raza prior to the start of the project through workshops and personal contacts.

In what follows, I take full advantage of the inside/outside perspective, proposing that it is possible to speak with critical distance from *within* the art object. I seek to bring out the paradoxes in *These associations*, which is Sehgal's largest (both in terms of duration and number of participants) and most ambitious project to date. I do not seek to imply that *These associations* is completely representative of Sehgal's entire oeuvre, instead I aim to articulate the tensions and contradictions which concern the complex layering of choreographic and conversational strategies that Sehgal deploys in this specific piece.

Within this context I argue that Sehgal's work plays with a quadruple denial of the art object. Firstly, he denies his work the status of 'dance', as it circulates within a visual art context. Secondly, he denies his work the status of 'object' and therefore confuses the boundaries of object and subject. Thirdly, he denies any clear distinction between reality and fiction, which brings out the paradox of authenticity and artificiality within the work. Lastly, and most importantly for my argument, by refusing to document his work, Sehgal responds to the inevitable difficulty of representing an art object. Instead, he relays the representation to reproducible human relations and interactions that actually produce, and exceed, the work. Ultimately, this chapter argues in line with the overall theme of this thesis, that Sehgal is an example of a post-conceptual choreographer who, through and because of his various denials, exercises an expanded dance practice, even though he might not call himself a choreographer and despite the fact that, or *precisely*

because, his work operates exclusively in the economy of production and reception of the art gallery.

3.1 Dancing (and) Viewership

If we want to consider the historical, theoretical and political legacy of Sehgal's work it is imperative to note that dance and visual art have had a continuous engagement with each other in the 20th century. Fundamental to understanding the relationship between the two art forms is the discourse around the role of the viewer and the nature of aesthetic experience, which goes as far back as conceptual art and minimalism. American art critic and historian Michael Fried argues in his seminal essay *Art and Objecthood* (1998, first published in 1969) that because minimalist sculpture is time and space specific and dependent on the embodied experience of the spectator, the object might reveal itself in the mind of the viewer as *other* than the actual object observed and contemplated, therefore becoming theatrical. In dance in the 1960s during the era of Judson Church Theatre (a group of dancers who worked and lived in Greenwich Village in Manhattan, New York City), choreographers such as Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown continuously pushed the boundaries of the art form, seeking ways to define and redefine what dance is and what it looked like. Rainer's *no manifesto* (1965) is clearly a way of articulating various denials, or rather rejections (of technique, virtuosity, spectacle, glamour, the gaze, etc.) which post-modern dance was engaged with at the time.

Similarly, and as discussed in the first chapter, we have seen a movement starting in the 1990s (some might call it conceptual, or non-dance), where a number of European experimental chorographers (Jérôme Bel and Xavier Le Roy are prominent examples) showed a renewed interest in the legacy of post-modern dance and, again, questioned the limits of what could be defined as dance. Even more recently, we have seen a move towards understanding choreography as expanded practice. Spångberg, Cvejić and Le Roy write: 'Choreography needs to redefine itself in order to include artists and others who use choreographic strategies without necessarily relating them to dance' (2012, online). In short, dance has had a long-standing history of denying *and* expanding itself, a move that is initiated from *within* the practice itself.

As for visual art, we have seen a turn towards relational art, participatory art and socially engaged art practice; forms which place an emphasis on actively involving the audience by creating social relations and interactions between viewer and artwork, artist and audience and/or participant and visitor. Clare Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) and Shannon Jackson's *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011) discuss this popular domain historically and critically, pointing towards the limitations of claims that are often made for the emancipatory qualities of socially engaged works.

What I have tried to bring out through this brief contextualisation is the fact that dance and visual art share many common concerns about issues such

as spectatorship and participation. It is therefore not surprising that we have seen a move to incorporate and welcome live performance and dance practices into the museum and gallery space in recent years, a move that is also reflected in London's cultural landscape. 2012 has seen the inauguration of Tate Modern's new live/performing arts and installation space The Tanks as well as the opening of the BMW Tate Live series. In the four years spanning 2010-2014 the Hayward Gallery, the Barbican Centre as well as the ICA and Raven Row Gallery have hosted several exhibitions on dance and performance.

This ongoing dialogue between dance and visual art is both an opportunity and a challenge since these practices operate on such different planes with different demands (spatially, conceptually, logistically). This new trend, which follows older ones as I have shown above, does not only represent a sudden aesthetic interest in dance but is signifying a shift in what cultural organisations value and judge to be important issues in the early 21st century. Both Gerhard Schulze's idea of an 'experience society' (1992) and Pine and Gilmore's theory of an 'experience economy' (1999) point towards a shift away from the celebration of the production, accumulation and consumption of physical objects, towards a society and economy that places greater importance on the acquisition of positive and unique experiences (Felstead, 2012, online). This new way of selling experiences instead of objects changes the economy of objects and the value that is placed on them.

Dance, performance and live art practices are engaged in highly precarious, flexible, immaterial, ephemeral and intangible modes of knowledge production and exchange, such as creating relationships, networks and/or intellectual and affective labour. These processes lie at the heart of many social and political debates and changes we are currently witnessing, at least in the Western world, at the beginning of the 21st century (for example an increase in self-employment, less stable working conditions, the financial crisis, etc.). Recent issues on *Precarity and Performance* (The Drama Review, Vol.56, No.4, Winter 2012) and *On Labour and Performance* (Performance Research, Vol.17, No.6, Spring 2013) demonstrate an urge to reclaim and return these post-Fordist issues of work and labour to the field of performance studies.

Considering the expanding context and recognition of the art form we might ask: can dance in the museum help us to re-evaluate the importance placed on aesthetic and cultural objects? Might it prompt us to rethink the relationship(s) we have with these objects? By placing dance in the gallery are we replacing, or expanding, the art object? In the following chapter I will show how Sehgal's work reveals, challenges and displaces notions of objecthood by focussing on his work *These associations*.

3.2 The Denial of the Dance Context

Tino Sehgal (born in London in 1976) is a Berlin-based British-German artist, who has received major recognition in the art world in the last few years. He was the youngest artist to represent Germany at the Venice Biennale in 2005

as well as the youngest artist to be given a solo show in the rotunda of the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2010. His works are in the collections of such important institutions as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa, New York City) and Tate (London) and he won the Golden Lion for best artist at the Venice Biennale 2013 and was nominated for the Turner Prize 2013. Sehgal has an undergraduate degree in *Volkswirtschaft* (national or political economics) from Humboldt University (Berlin) and he studied contemporary dance at the Folkwang University of the Arts (Essen). He went on to work with French experimental choreographers Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel and the Belgium collective Les Ballets C. de la B. before starting to develop his own work. We can thus start to see a biographical and historical link between post-modern dance, more recent European dance and Sehgal's work, as these different positions react to, interact with, rebel against and influence each other.

Sehgal's background in both contemporary dance and economics has enabled him to develop a unique operating system, or methodology, within which he produces, presents and preserves his works. Some people might argue that Sehgal's work cannot be called 'dance'. This is true if we think of it in a tradition or lineage of dance. However, the craft or skill that he employs to make his art is rooted deeply in a choreographic tradition; he comes from dance, not from visual arts.

Sehgal insists that his works are not performances (Gleadell, 2013, online). His works circulate on the art market as objects that can be collected, sold

and installed. The ephemeral character of his works does not present an issue or problem here. When Sehgal sells his work, there is only a verbal contract between him and the buyer in the presence of a notary and the deal is closed with a handshake. '[N]o document is exchanged, nor are any receipts issued to either the collector or lawyer. The piece is simply traded for cash up front.' (Sayej, 2006, p.20) In every verbal contract there are certain conditions that have to be agreed upon, for example the transmission of the art work by an authorised person (a close collaborator of Sehgal who is obliged to pass on her knowledge to a younger person at an appropriate time) to its interpreters (a name Sehgal uses for his performers who are not always professional performers but can be people from any professional background), the agreement of a minimum wage for the interpreters and the installation of the work for the entirety of the opening hours of the exhibition (Gleadell, 2013, online).

This mode of production, which is different from the way dance or theatre pieces are conventionally disseminated (normally through an agreed number of paid performances by the solo artist/company), illustrates the point that Sehgal denies his pieces the status of 'dance' and is keen to have them circulate in a visual art context as (immaterial) objects. Initially, it could have been his background in economics, and/or the realisation that the art world provides a much wider, more lucrative context than the experimental dance context, which led him to follow in the tradition of visual art. It is clear however, that Sehgal has other strong and ambitious reasons to pursue a career in this 'broader' context, as we will see.

If it is true that culture, not politics, is the field where societal values are currently discussed (Sehgal, 2012, my notes[12]), then the gallery exists as a valuing machine of Western culture. The gallery as a container for 'serious art', as opposed to theatre which (still) has an association with entertainment, despite its long history with more radical and challenging formats (Ridout, 2007, online), not only has the power to affirm certain (belief) systems, but also the opportunity and responsibility to change perceptions and lead the way forward by offering artists, curators and visitors an official and legitimising place from which they can raise, address, display, contemplate and discuss important contemporary cultural and societal issues. Kari Rittenbach writes about Tate Modern's The Tanks, '[t]he new space thus appears as a grand metaphor for (cultural) energy in a post-industrial, service-industry economy, where the body is easily fetishized as bearer of the "real"' (2012, online).

Three conclusions can be drawn from this first section: Firstly, dance is no longer a marginal art form existing at the periphery and in the shadow of theatre or performance practices. It is placed at the centre of art production and will increasingly become important in political and cultural terms. Secondly, as the boundaries between art forms are becoming increasingly fluid, classifications and labels such as choreographer, artist, etc. might be becoming obsolete. Thirdly, in order to fully exploit dance's economic and

[12] By "my notes" I'm referring to written notes that I took during and after workshops and rehearsals that were held by Sehgal at Tate Modern between August 2009 and July 2012.

cultural potentials, choreographers and others working in the field need to rethink definitions of what shall be classified as dance and look openly towards possible and multiple futures in unclaimed territories.

3.3 The Denial of the Material Object of Art

One of the ways in which Sehgal conceptualises the denial of any material aspect of his work is by insisting that he makes, or rather generates, products rather than objects. This aspect is more important if we look at his work from the visual arts perspective as in the performing arts material objects are not normally produced or are at least not the main focus of the work. Sehgal's works complicate the relationship between ephemerality and commodity in the visual arts, demonstrating that these notions are not a priori contradictory. He further complicates the notions of subject and object by placing relations between people at the core of his art by only utilising the body's capacities, voice (conversation and singing) and movement, the oldest forms of conversation or exchange, to create the work. 'My point is that dance as well as singing […] could be a paradigm for another mode of production which stresses transformation of acts instead of transformation of material' (Sehgal in von Hantelmann, 2007, p.174). Von Hantelmann suggests that 'Sehgal's work has the character of an experiment at the heart of which lies the question of how to create *something* from *nothing*; how to semantically create meaning and create economic value without producing a physical object' (2007, p.151). Here we can see the relevance of Sehgal's background in economics as his contemporary works critique the 'naive, anti-market romanticism of the '60s' (Simonini, 2011, p.31). He argues that the

‘market economy or capitalism […] is not such a problem: the problem is what circulates within that system. And what circulates has nothing to do with this system of distribution itself, but with a specific culture’ (Sehgal in Heiser, 2005, p.102). In other words, not the fact that you sell but what you sell and how you sell it should be problematised.

Sehgal complicates matters between object and subject, or rather subject and subject, further by regularly including or even encouraging an element of interaction between the visitor and the interpreter/participant. The visitor is often implicated in the work through personal address and she/he can influence the course/direction in which the piece is going significantly. Much as in the performing arts (and in contrast to traditional art objects), Sehgal’s pieces need the audience to come into being. The same is true for *These associations*. The piece has a clearly defined framework or structure within which the participants act, but there are a number of variables that are in flux and can change depending on the presence and the participation of the viewer, who has the choice to engage in a conversation, watch others do this, remain a silent listener, join in the walking, participate in playing a game or disengage and simply walk away. In *These associations* the situation is further complicated by the specific architecture and design of the Turbine Hall. Different modes of (collective ‘mass’ and individual) spectatorship were activated by the piece, as some people would be watching only from the bridge or the upper galleries and would never come down, therefore remaining ‘outside’ the work, whilst others would be keen to immerse themselves downstairs ‘inside’ the piece.

What I have tried to draw out above is the fact that Sehgal insists on the anti-modernist notion that the artwork is incomplete without the viewer. Rather than being simply confronted with an object in an exhibition, his work actually asks the viewer (sometimes indirectly and sometimes directly) '"What do you think?" and thereby also infers, "What you do or what you say matters and will also change the course of this work"' (Sehgal in von Hantelmann, 2007, p.186). This reciprocity carries a certain potential for confusion (for both participant/interpreter and visitor/viewer), as the boundaries between subject and object are tested and blurred. The viewer might ask: Can I look at this person? How do I position myself in relationship to her/him or to others? How do I talk to her/him? Am I responsible for their actions? From this position of joint responsibility, the viewer might feel empowered or gain a sense of authority. She/he becomes aware of her/his power but also powerlessness and may realise the potential and limits of her/his actions (von Hantelmann, 2007, p.192). This forcing into action is not always pleasurable as the viewer might experience a feeling of discomfort when she/he realises that her/his participation is on display, exposed, mirrored. The abandonment, or denial, of the object brings with it the emergence, or expansion, of the subject.

Sehgal's approach is based on an ecological system that rejects material accumulation and exponential growth in favour of the sustainability movement. His arguments seem extremely plausible: '[t]he 21st century is not about accumulating material wealth like the 20th century. It's already eroding. I'm not against material things – I just don't work with them' (in Higgins, 2012,

online). He continues to suggest that 'objects […] offer false promises of stability and security, just as writing offers a false promise of precision' (ibid.). Dance might be a particularly potent place to exercise critique of material art objects as Lepecki argues, '[d]ance's ephemerality demonstrates the possibility of creating alternative economies of objecthood in the arts, by showing that it is possible to create artworks away from regimes of commodification and fetishization of tangible objects' (2012, p.15).

I have sought to demonstrate in this section that *These associations* destabilises notions of objecthood and subjectivity in the context of an art work as it is no longer clear who is object and who is subject. Am I the object because I am being watched or am I the subject because I approach people and talk to them? Am I the subject because I am the viewer or do I become the object through my participation? Am I included or excluded in the work?

3.4 Participation between Authenticity and Artificiality

Writer Shane Anderson, blogging about *These associations*, asks in his entry from December 2012 an intriguing question: 'Is the art world a world in itself or does it spill out on the pavement?' (2012, online) In what follows I seek to show how *These associations* confuses and complicates the tensions and paradoxes between reality and fiction by questioning the division of authenticity and artificiality. Catherine Wood, Curator of Contemporary Art and Performance at Tate Modern, helps us to unpack these issues when she writes in an article on Sehgal's previous work when it was shown at the ICA in 2005:

> The performers never 'open' their subjectivity in the manner of, say, Marina Abramović. The self-conscious paranoia induced by Sehgal's open invitation to probe the boundaries of this work represents a transfer of emotional vulnerability, displacing the revelation of internal subjectivity from the performer to the – perhaps involuntary – spectator who is framed as though on stage. […] Never represented in photographic form, the work operates at the thinnest boundary between art and life, its status as an object resting on the spectator's understanding of the performative iteration 'This Is…'. (2005, online)

The word, or phrase, *This …* acts as a signature but also as a framing device so that the situation can become an art work. 'It also gives it value and places emphasis on the here and now of the situation and that it matters, it is important' (von Hantelmann, 2007, p.180-181).

'This is Tino Sehgal's *These associations*'. How many times must I have uttered these six re-assuring, relieving, banal, unsubtle and deeply disturbing words? How quickly can a meaningful and profound encounter with another person be turned into an aesthetic object-experience? The crux of our conversations with visitors, which went straight into the story or subject matter without any form of introduction, evolved around one rule only: if the visitor asked anything about the structure, practicalities or logistics of the work or wanted to talk about the concept, context or content of the piece itself, we had to leave. This was the most difficult and paradoxical moment in the work for both participant and visitor, as it produces a rupture, a break in the relationship. Suddenly we become acutely aware that we are in an artificial situation; that we are in a museum talking to strangers, engaging with an art object, *doing* the art. This realisation produces a distancing which we were at the same time trying to overcome in these private encounters.

A further paradox was the ‘off topic’ of art in our conversations with visitors, as many of the participants were working in or connected to the cultural sector, often not directly as performers or dancers but as writers, journalists, curators, academics, philosophers, art students, photographers, and other cultural workers. In our conceits we had to deny, to some extent, a large part of ourselves by shifting or even concealing our identities. Sehgal explained to us that to talk about art in the space of art has a doubling effect that distracts from the ‘real’ experience in the here and now (2012, my notes). The piece then risks becoming a self-reflective exercise about the *how* rather than the *what*. Even though I agree to some extent, his theoretical argument does not reconcile the bitter disappointment that always brought us back to the recognition that *we were the artwork* and that there was no escape from the objectification of our experiences in the service of the work.

Etymologically, the word art comes from artificiality which points towards the artificial nature of any artwork. Yet, in *These associations* we were encouraged to be ourselves, to tell true, ‘authentic’ stories and to make each encounter with a visitor into a unique, tailored and meaningful experience for them (and us). The intimacies that we shared with the visitors depended on a degree of anonymity that the context of the artwork provided. We might feel freer to reveal something about ourselves, something honest, to a stranger because we do not feel responsible or have to worry about the consequences afterwards (as you would with a close friend for example). Since the exchange is artificially embedded into the structural framework of the artwork, it is never clear if we are acting, telling stories or even lies, or if

our conversations are genuine and ‘true’, specific to each visitor or repeated to many.

Having said this, the most enjoyable experiences for me, as a participant in the project, were the rare occasions when visitors changed my way of thinking about a particular issue, when they challenged what I had said or disagreed with it, or genuinely and generously offered a point of view or angle that I had not been able to see myself. At its best *These associations* had the potential to intersect with ‘real’ life in such a profound and deep way that actual ‘real’ change was implemented in a person’s life, even though we (both visitor and participant) were both fully aware of the artificial frame of the art object and the temporal limits of our encounter.

French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas’s idea of ethics as first philosophy might initially seem a useful way to theorise this confusion and indeed many theorists have done this in relation to participatory art, for example Grant Kester in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004), as well as contemporary dance, for example Joshua Abrams *Ethics of the Witness: The Participatory Dances of Cie Felix Ruckert* (2003). In Lévinas’s philosophy the ethical relationship comes first, as the other (person) exists prior to the self. In *These associations* the participation of the viewer performs an ethical relationship as she/he is called into existence through the encounter (the dialogue) with the other (performer). This face-to-face encounter suggests that the viewer has an ethical responsibility towards the performer in the moment of interaction (even if she/he remains silent) as

she/he is actively constructing the future identity of the other (performer) and vice versa. However, as I have shown above, *These associations* as an art object actually undermines the Lévinasian obligation to the other. Since we can never fully know whether we are acting or not, we might not have to adhere to any moral 'standards' of ethical recognition and responsibility. This might then be the most useful and productive quality of an artwork: a place where ethics are suspended, a 'playground' to test, push and rethink ethical ideas of self and other. *These associations* then acts as a reminder that we are always performing (not just when we are on stage) and that there is no true authentic genuine self.

The question of how anonymous we really were in this seemingly protected space of the artwork remains a further paradox. I was surprised to meet a woman in the green room that I had told an intimate story during the press opening. It turned out that she was a journalist and had not only written about my conceit in the article, but had also been invited to participate in the work in response to her article. This might have been an unlucky coincidence, but the effect that it had on me as a participant was that I never again found the courage to open myself as fully after the first week of the project as I had been able during rehearsals. There are many incidents when participants have been approached on the street or in the bus (in 'real life' so to say) by strangers who remembered their encounters, sometimes continuing their conversation were they had left. This recognition is not always mutual, as one can easily loose track of conversations and faces taking into account the

sheer volume of encounters that we had over the three months period of the project.

These associations have spilled, and continue to spill out on the pavement more than other objects installed in the Turbine Hall. This is not only true in relation to the visitor, but also for the participants themselves who have stayed in touch via facebook groups, reading groups and newly formed artistic collaborations or simply through becoming friends, during and after the project. *These associations* was an ambitious project in that it aimed to produce an engagement, from both visitor and participant, which went well beyond the place of production (the Turbine Hall). One final example might help to clarify my point. One day we found ourselves walking up and down the Turbine Hall when the fire alarm sounded. As everyone was leaving the building we collectively, and without much discussion, decided to continue *These associations* outside. In this moment we instigated the ultimate moment of confusion, when it was no longer clear when, where and who the artwork was. In this moment the artwork was truly spreading out of its form and literally spilling itself onto the pavement.

3.5 Participation between Individuality and Collectivity

So far I have written about Sehgal's work in terms of its premise and its conceptual proposition. I have argued that Sehgal's work in general can be thought of as an expanded choreographic performance practice. In the following section I will delve more deeply into the specifics of *These associations*, writing about the specific questions and issues the project

raises. The central (research) question that Sehgal is concerned with in *These associations* is the relationship between a group, or collective, and the individual (Searle, 2012, online). How is it possible to move inside a group without losing a sense of one's individuality, or agency? In a society in which most of us strive to be different, rather than similar, how can we rethink commonality? How can we rethink what it means to belong to a group? In times of 'hyper-individualisation' (Sehgal, 2012, my notes), how does it feel to sing together, or walk together? Can we find satisfaction and pleasure again in these collective actions without suppressing our own individual sense of being? What does it mean to 'belong'? Individualism, one could argue, is a relatively recent phenomenon that is excelerated by various aspects in Western society. In these current globalised, highly flexible and mobile times, we have to work towards our sense of belonging; it is not something that comes automatically.

Although I can sympathise with Sehgal's emphasis on the individual to some degree, I would argue that we live in a world where we still need others, and where we are constantly looking for recognition from others. It is a fact, so anthropology tells us, that human beings are inherently social beings. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy addresses the inherent contradictions of community (the 'we') and freedom of the 'I' in *Being Singular Plural* (2000). The book takes as its premise the thought that there is no Being (Heidegger's *Dasein*) without Being-with (*Mitsein*). To put it differently: whereas for Heidegger Being was a solitary mode, Nancy argues that there is no existence without co-existence. Community comes prior to individual

being, which is only made possible through shared modes of understanding. Community is not the end product of a gathering of individuals but its pre-condition.

These associations can be read as a symbolic and practical example of Nancy's Being-with through its negotiating modes of subjectivity and togetherness. The piece raises the issue of how a community could be seen as pluralist, neither a unified singular public nor a dispersed multitude of individuals. The different modes or models of collectivity were explored in the somewhat forced and artificial singing moments but also in the 'slow walk', in which we, a group of seventy people, had to negotiate two separate sub-tasks: firstly, to accelerate or decelerate from an extremely slow walk to full-on sprinting, or vice versa, over the time of thirty minutes, and secondly, to stay together as a group. The 'slow walk' was an extremely excruciating task for many people including myself. Firstly, one had to give up one's individual agency by sacrificing/compromising one's own sense of timing for the sake of the group's success in the task and then, more often than not and despite enormous efforts, concentration and self-control, the group would still fall apart. The simple task of walking together becomes a double negative experience since it virtually impossible to negotiate the different priorities of the group and oneself.

One game that was less collective was called 'triangles'. We had to pick two people with whom we had to stay in a triangle. This created a shifting and changing web, since 'my' two people would also have picked two other

people who had picked two other people. Yet another game was called ‘distance game’, in which we had to maximise the space around us by stepping into the space that seemed the emptiest. This particular game worked as a network in which I somehow related to these people around me but actually had no idea how exactly. In ‘cells’, an offshoot of triangles, we made up certain rules for each other (for example, one person always had to stay behind the other person) in clusters of four to six people. Often in these cells one person would have more power over the others and was able to manipulate the speed or direction in which the group was moving. We half-jokingly came up with ‘fascist cells’, ‘communist cells’ and ‘democratic cells’.

These games were not new choreographic inventions but familiar exercises from the dance and drama studio and rehearsal room. Nevertheless, when they were played in a space like the Tate Modern, they created various forms of group dynamics. Often the games did not seem to follow any obvious rule, at least from an outside perspective. One day, a man that had been watching us for quite a while, started shouting ‘But who is the leader? I want to know who the leader is!’ Of course, the crux of the situation is that there is no single leader and in all of the games, decisions are made collectively within the group and it becomes impossible to pinpoint any particular individual. This seemed unnerving for some visitors, who desperately tried to work out what we were doing. I would argue that what was often expressed as frustration towards the work by visitors was actually a purposefully staged dramaturgy. We are hardly ever able to understand the structures that we live in because they are highly complex, confusing and often impossible to

see. Whether it is in politics, economics or art, do we really understand the 'games' we are playing?

Looked at from the participant perspective, the spatial games in *These associations* also point at something slightly different. We live in a society tired of choice, in which we are constantly assessing ourselves in relation to others. Am I playing the right game? Am I playing the game right? Am I winning? Am I still part of the game? Should I go into this direction or this other? The notion of self-interpretation became increasingly important as we became more acquainted with the nature of the work. There was a constant assessment of oneself within the group (What do I think the group needs right now?), and an assessment of the visitor (Does she/he look interested? What kind of thing should I tell her/him? Has she/he been talked to before? If yes, by whom and what would that person have told them? How long have they been here? Are a lot of other people talking at the moment and not enough people playing the game(s), are there too many people talking and not enough people playing the game(s)?) After a long, and often physically and mentally exhausting day at Tate Modern it seemed to sink in: it is tiring to make choices all the time. There is a tension in the idea of choice: on the one hand a privilege, on the other hand a burden.

One of the things that surprised me most about the project was that although there seemed to be a loss of control by the artist over the work (something that Sehgal himself admitted was necessary), there was never a situation in which things spiralled totally out of control. There were no moments of

anarchy, rebellion or chaos within the group, even though it might have looked like that from the outside. I often asked myself why we did not refuse to follow a game or sequence and instead stepped aside or simply lay down on the floor for a while. This seemed not simply a logistical problem. Sehgal cleverly gave us just enough power, or control, or agency that we were happy to play along dutifully within the confines he had set for us. This obedience/loyalty to the author by us participants leaves a disappointing taste in my mouth. We had the opportunity to do something different or 'radical' (whatever that something might have been) and we missed our chance.

3.6 The Denial of the Document

My final point concerns Sehgal's denial to document his works. Performance Studies has had a long engagement with issues of liveness, presence, (dis)appearance, reconstruction, documentation and the archive. While discussing the counter arguments made by Philip Auslander (1999) and Rebecca Schneider (2001) exceeds the limits of this chapter, Sehgal can be placed most closely to Phelan's seminal essay on *The Ontology of Performance* (1993), in which she argues that 'performance becomes itself […] through disappearance' (p.146). Photographing or videotaping his work is strictly forbidden, as he insists that it does not correctly represent the nature of the artwork and gives a falsifying impression.

Performance Art from the 1960s and 1970s has often had an uneasy relationship with the gallery as a place for art collection, since much of the

work once sought to critique the art market within which it now tries to survive. Amelia Jones (2011) has written about the contradictions in the current re-enactment work (*The Artist is Present*) of pioneering performance artist Marina Abramović as a recent and prominent example. Sehgal, on the other hand, neither capitalises on the documentation of his work, which resists being turned into commodity, nor exercises institutional critique; his approach is subtler, conceptually sound and consistent with the 'no object' policy. He rejects any form of written information about the work (labels, catalogue entries or exhibition notes) although, of course, others, like me, write about his work.

As he relies purely on verbal communication, nothing is written down at any stage in the production circle, although he does not forbid others to make notes, as I did after the workshops were over, for instance. His absence, or invisibility, is an unusual stance in the art world, which celebrates and promotes the individual, singular author. His unavailability seems out of step with our world at large, in which everything increasingly seems to be available and accessible at the click of the mouse. Nancy Spector, deputy director and chief curator of the Guggenheim in New York, explains that Sehgal questions 'the false hierarchy between the actual event and what becomes a substitute for that event' (in Adamowicz, 2010, online). In other words, in times when we might think that we can access every piece of information through the internet in the comfort of our homes, he insists on a degree of 'liveness'.

Through his particular methodology he challenges the archival system often employed by institutions like museums and galleries; instead of authorising documents and objects as carriers of knowledge, he places human beings and their memories at the centre of knowledge transfer. It is not surprising to see this move in Sehgal, since he comes from dance, an art form that has long recognised the capacities of the body as archive, and body-to-body transmission as the most efficient and accurate way to pass on knowledge and experience. On the other hand, choreographers have had a troubled relationship with legacy, preservation and archive. For example, Martha Graham was resistant to any forms of recording of her dancing until late in her career (Thoms, 2013) and Yvonne Rainer, who I discuss further in Chapter 6, insists that one cannot learn *Trio A* from the video documentation alone (2009).

One can read Sehgal's resistance to documentation as a renewed interest in the importance of space/place, particularly considering that he comes from a choreographic background. Ever advancing technology offers us the opportunity to displace notions of place (and time). We are able to stop and play, to fast-forward and rewind, to repeat over and over again. Sehgal's work resists these notions by investing in the possibility of new and spontaneous connections that can be made (only) in every new place where and when the work is installed (Richards, 2012, p.76). The critical reception of Sehgal's work has often focused on his privileging of the live event and the resistance to mechanical reproductions of his works via documentation. For instance, British art historian Claire Bishop seems to accuse him of feeding a

myth-making art machine that thrives on legend and word-of-mouth recommendation, and that relies on anecdotes and rumours and on the artist as authorial genius. She reminds us, '[t]he performance and our experience of it are not the sum total of the work or its end: They are also pretexts for a meditation on dissemination (the role of oral history and rumour) and interpretation' (2005, online). The fixation on the live event that produces a moment that cannot be repeated is potentially the ultimate marketing tool: 'You just had to be there' – the perfect advertising slogan?

Yet, and despite Sehgal's and his gallerist's efforts to eliminate pictures and video material from the internet, there are plenty of unofficial documents of *These associations* circulating on video and photo sharing websites, for example YouTube and Flickr. Whilst these can in no way represent the work in an accurate way, they bear witness to a far more disturbing fact: many people that came to the Turbine Hall preferred to experience their encounter through their technological screen-based devices, such as mobile phones, rather than focussing on what they saw in front of them.[13] However subtly, or unsubtly, we tried to discourage people from using their phones, we could not counter the overwhelming and overpowering flood of amateur photographers and filmmakers. We stood powerless and frustrated in the vast and busy space when people, in quite an open and disturbing way, turned our private stories into spectacles to be shown to friends afterwards or distributed on the internet to, potentially, millions of people. It is

[13] This is a global phenomenon and applies not just to this particular art project but also to all kinds of other activities (sports events, performances, concerts, public gatherings and celebrations, etc.).

understandable that people want to have a relic; a fragment that reminds them of what was and that brings back memories. But what does this obsession with evidence, preservation and documentation actually do? There is no way to return to the past, to shared moments and experiences. We cannot fixate the past, present or future. Every time we take a photograph we deny the possibility of living and experiencing the moment as complete in itself, as fleeting and disappearing.

To conclude, Sehgal's works paradoxically both challenge and critique, but also miss the opportunity to significantly change the operation of the art market. Despite his refusal to have his art archived and documented, his works rely on the context of the gallery and he will be the first to admit that he wants to circulate them within these official structures. His works do not exercise direct critique; they are adjusting rather than disposing or disrupting the economic operating systems of the art market. One could say that Sehgal is simultaneously denying the art object whilst at the same time reinforcing its status as art object. He exercises an expanded choreographic performance practice in a space traditionally reserved for material objects. Since he is not a choreographer who only occasionally works in the gallery, his consistent artistic practice opens the possibility for dance to be seen in an expanded sense both as visual art and as post-conceptual choreography. This paradoxical position of his work does not represent a dilemma or contradiction for Sehgal, as for him the project takes a wider place in the history of artistic intervention, or rather *con*vention. Von Hantelmann argues, 'the artwork does not *gain* a societal impact by rupturing […] conventions; it

is via […] conventions that there already is a societal impact' (2007, p.14). She writes, '[w]hat becomes significant and meaningful […] is not the representational level of the artwork, not what it signifies, depicts or represents, but its factual existence, which becomes the point of departure for artistic agency and positing' (ibid, p.151).[14]

These associations, as one of Sehgal's largest and most ambitious projects, achieved critical success, through media coverage and the nomination for the Turner Prize 2013. It potentially represents a significant turning point in modes of future art *and* dance production. It pushed against the boundaries of both art forms and opened up the gallery as another avenue, context and platform where dance and choreography could be seen and experienced (even if the piece was not explicitly labelled as such), making the art form more relevant and accessible for a much wider audience. The fact that *These associations* as well as *This Variation* (2012) for dOCUMENTA (13) and his piece for the Venice Biennale 2013 utilised to a large degree (group) singing/chanting and simple everyday movement seems a departure for Sehgal from previous works which used mainly conversation (*This objective of that object* (2004), *This Progress* (2006), *This Situation* (2007)) or tightly choreographed movement (*Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things* (2000), *Kiss* (2002), *Ann Lee*

[14] Hantelmann's point here is not just relevant to Sehgal's strategy of using choreographic methods to produce an art object which circulates as such, but to dance as a marginal sector of the arts. As more galleries and museums become interested in dance and choreography, the art form has the opportunity to leave the periphery and become part of a system of new conventions, not by rupturing the existing system but by practising resistance and difference from within. To put it more explicitly, the factual existence of dance in the museum will inevitably change the convention of visual art as well as dance.

(2011)). This raises questions around the cerebral and intellectual nature of dialogue versus (communal) moments of affective and emotional response to movement/dancing and music, as well as opening up the discussion around dance as a (supposedly) non-verbal art form, specifically in relation, or even opposition, to visual art practices, a discussion that exceeds the limits of this chapter. It is also interesting to note that the cultivation of community amongst the participants as well as the improvised singing/dancing in his recent works has the effect of excluding the visitor by turning her/him into a spectator (of a performance) rather than trying to address her/him directly within the work itself *as* the object.

Throughout this chapter I have drawn on the confusions, contradictions, tensions and paradoxes in *These associations* in order to show some of the complex issues at play in one specific example of Sehgal's artistic practice. Participating in and thinking about his work has raised, and continues to raise, many questions for me. These questions are relevant to contemporary choreographic practices as they address, indirectly or directly, issues such as the relationship between dance and visual art (particularly participatory and socially engaged art practices), dance in the museum, dance and objecthood, dance and documentation, dance and transmission, dance and site-specificity and social choreography.

My main argument has been that *These associations* performs a quadruple denial of the art object. My argumentation is, of course, in some way nonsensical. *These associations* **is** a work of art. It was commissioned by

one of the main galleries for contemporary art in the world and will probably be sold for thousands of pounds, euros or dollars. For instance, MoMa bought *Kiss* for $70,000 (Richards, 2012, p. 72). But let us for a brief moment forget about money. Let us consider *These associations* as an example of post-conceptual dance that exercises an expanded choreographic performance practice. It therefore extends both the context and object of dance and visual art, making it a bridge, a point of simultaneous transition and divergence, an in-between-space, between inside and outside, between participant and visitor, neither object nor subject, finally, a way of being with others in the world.

4. *After the Future*: Choreography as the Practice of Editing

After discussing the choreographer as spectator (Chapter 2) and as participant (Chapter 3), this chapter introduces the choreographer as editor. The aim of this chapter is to collapse and undo certain binaries that are important for the development of the argument in this thesis, for example between theory and practice, which I began to trace in Chapter 1. This collapsing is intended as a conceptual as well as methodological strategy, given the theoretical-artistic nature of this research project. In the following writing I will expand on ideas concerning the shifting role of the choreographer from author to editor, the dancer as copyist, performance as a 'catching up' in time and place and the implications of understanding choreography as a theoretical, as well as practical, field of study. These ideas tie back in with the overall argument of the thesis, which is to understand post-conceptual dance as an expanded practice that does not necessarily involve the conventional object of dance: dancing.

My choreographic performance practice in this project attempts to critique the idea that dance is a form of expression that lends itself to producing experiences of aesthetic (visual) pleasure and satisfaction in the viewer. As I have discussed in Chapter 1, choreography at the beginning of the 21st century should not only be understood as contained in the discipline of dance, but as an expanded practice relevant not just to the field of arts or education but also to society at large. Choreography as a theoretical field of study opens up possibilities for a new approach to training dancers, through

understanding itself both as a theoretical tool and a ‘doing’ practice. The intertwining of theory and practice comments on important and timely philosophical issues that expand beyond dance, such as subjectivity, representation, embodiment, authorship, spectatorship, participation, collaboration and knowledge production. In this way dance, which places an emphasis on individual experience and movement, becomes even more relevant to many current political processes, such as globalisation and changing labour/work structures. As I have argued in Chapter 1, dance is expanding beyond its perception as an object that can be described in terms of style (of a certain choreographer-author) or subject matter (theme). As it becomes more and more recognised for its potential as a form of production (rather than representation), it can comment on its own politics and is able to reposition itself in a wider social and political context.

In this chapter then, I will discuss my work titled *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo*, a twenty-minute video piece which I created in dialogue with the theoretical concerns of the chapter, referred to above, which attempts to illustrate these issues in practice. *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* has a ‘double identity’. As a work it manifests itself both as a live performance and as a piece of video art. Two different live performance versions were presented at Hotel Elephant (a gallery in South London) as part of *The Industry Invites…* on 19th July 2012 and at the *Performing Documents* Conference at Arnolfini (Bristol) on 14th April 2013. In this chapter I will mainly refer to the video version, which is not to be read as documentation of

the live event, but as a work in and of itself.[15]

My questions at the beginning of the work were: How can I complicate the relationship between theory and practice, undermining both? How can I turn a lecture into a dance? How can I turn theory into practice? How can I take something that already exists and turn it into something else? How can I respond to Bifo's proposition about the end of the future? These questions relate back to the issues I have discussed in Chapter 1, including the expanded notion of practice that positions choreography in the field of post-conceptual dance.

In *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo,* a performer (Stella Dimitrakopoulou) copies, without prior rehearsal, words and movements from a video which shows the Italian Marxist theorist and activist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi explaining key concepts from his book *After the Future* (2011). My video, which places the 'original' video of Berardi[16] next to Dimitrakopoulou's copied version, explores the relationship between humans and technology and ultimately asks where meaning resides – in the body, in between bodies, in the voice, in gestures, in words, in spoken or written language, in movement language, in languages of the body. With this piece, I argue that when dance approaches theoretical text in this way, its meaning does not reside only in language but in complex relationships to the body/to bodies and ultimately in

[15] Please see Appendix 2 for a transcript of the text in the video.
[16] This video, which shows Franco 'Bifo' Berardi explaining key concepts from his book *After the Future* (2011), is directed by Gary Genosko and produced by the Infoscape Centre for the Study of Social Media, Ryerson University.

the space between bodies (performer/spectator or writer/reader).

These multiple displacements are essential to the reading of the work. The premise of the performance for video is at first sight simple: Dimitrakopoulou copies both words and movement from Berardi's talk. Yet, already before this transmission from one body to another, one other displacement has taken place. Since *After the Future* is a full-length book, Berardi has made a selection in the form of a script, even if he hardly refers to this in his talk. Therefore, there is an initial displacement from written to spoken language, preceding Dimitrakopoulou's performance. These types of displacements continue through what I propose to call a practice of copying, which is here not used as a dismissive term with negative connotations, but as a challenging, skilful and attentive act of performance.

4.1 The Dancer as Copyist

It is common knowledge and practice that dancers traditionally learn their craft by copying (movement) from others. In a technique class the teacher would often show exercises and sequences, which the dance students copy. This is a traditional way of transmitting dance knowledge (about a certain technique, a piece of repertoire or a choreography) from one body to another. Dance students often spend many years copying other people's movements before they start creating their own work. They engage in a process of repeating and returning again and again in order to inscribe and memorise certain techniques and to preserve another's gesture. It could be

said then that one constructs one's own identity, and becomes oneself, through copying another.

In *After the Future,* I playfully comment on the 'show and copy' tradition by presenting the dancer as 'virtuoso' copyist, foregrounding notions of synchronicity and difference that are fundamental principles in choreographic practice. I tried to emphasise this by giving Dimitrakopoulou the task to copy Berardi as accurately as possible. I wanted her to engage in the act of copying, to be fully absorbed in it in order to create distance and to work against notions of 'performance'. Despite her obvious awareness that she is performing, she does not try to 'act like' or even portray Berardi. The focus for her is on 'doing' rather than 'being'.

The difference between 'doing' and 'being' was further emphasised when the work was presented as a live performance. The moments of 'pause' between the sections became important markers in highlighting Dimitrakopoulou's task-like activity, as she returned to a 'neutral' position, to her own physicality, for a split second. Dimitrakopoulou's direct relationship with the camera in the video is different to when the work is performed live, as the relationship, which is normally immediate, is disrupted by technology. During the live performance, the almost dialectical character and tone of Berardi's talk was emphasised, as it became even more difficult for Dimitrakopoulou to 'connect' with the people in front of her due to the distance the screen created between her and the audience. The technological 'obstacle' ironically points towards the impossibility of performance to communicate 'directly', in a

straightforward way. Nonetheless, the video clearly shows the bodily differences between Dimitrakopoulou and Berardi, as the task of copying exposes the physicality, the character, the expressiveness, the gestures, the habits and the accents of both 'performers'. One of the reasons for choosing Berardi as a subject for copy was his engaging physicality and his distinct presence as a performer, which Dimitrakopoulou can only fail to match and which, in turn, brings out her own physicality even more. I suggest that the act of copying for a post-conceptual dancer functions as a kind of relief, in which she is no longer required to fully express herself through an emphasis on her individual identity. At the same time the task might make Berardi aware of the peculiarities of his 'movement vocabulary', should he ever come across the video.

The act of copying further posits performance as the practice of 'catching-up' and complicates notions of time. Since *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* is performed without prior rehearsal, it could be called an act of instant performance. There is no hidden practice; the labour/skill of the work is what one sees in the moment of its realisation (not counting, of course, the years of training that Dimitrakopoulou undertook as a dancer). Yet there is a slight delay, a 'behindness', as Dimitrakopoulou tries to 'catch up' with Berardi's speed and rhythm. This complex and paradoxical relationship between past and present is made explicit in the piece, as Dimitrakopoulou explains the demands that the act of copying places on her as a performer: 'I'm trying to stay in the present whilst catching up a moment that is already in the past

[Berardi's gesture] which is actually before the present moment' (personal conversation, 14 April 2013).

4.2 The Choreographer as Editor

If the post-conceptual dancer partakes in the act of copying, with its multiple translations that complicate notions of time and authenticity, I propose the act of editing as the practice of the post-conceptual choreographer. Lepecki has described choreography as a 'system of command' (2008, p.3) that controls and disciplines bodies in the same way as we could say language is a system of command that controls and disciplines (written and spoken) voices. Whereas my practice at times acknowledges and exposes these commanding systems, it also seeks to escape and challenge them. It approaches choreography as an expanded practice by trying to find alternative strategies for making dance work, such as methods of copying and editing.

For instance, in *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* I reintroduce the choreographer as editor (as opposed to author), both in a sense of literally framing the act of editing (whether it is film or text) as choreography, as well as conceptualising the task of the editor as someone who is involved in activities such as adapting, developing, handling, focussing, selecting, combining, structuring, ordering and organising, which are all aspects of choreography. It is the responsibility of the editor to prepare the final outcome for publication by considering and negotiating between the author, the reader and the work. In other words, the editor creates

frames/frameworks for movement to take place (similar to Lepecki's notion of choreography as a commanding system) and provides the condition(s) for something to happen, without necessarily having a clear preconceived idea of how the overall work is going to look. In his book *Postproduction,* Bourriaud writes, with reference to art production since the early 1990s, that 'an ever increasing number of artworks have been created on the basis of preexisting works; more and more artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products' (2002, p.7). He asserts that 'artists who insert their own work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work' (2002, p.7).

I would add to Bourriaud's observation that the methodology of copying further confuses the boundaries between subject and object, between viewer and performer, between author and copyist and between choreographer and editor, questioning where the object resides. To position the choreographer not as author but as editor and to create a video work out of preexisting material is a strategy that questions the necessity of creation and production (of an original work of art), placing instead importance on the way this material is presented and interpreted. As I have argued in Chapter 1, the role of the spectator when she/he is directly addressed through the lens of the camera places responsibility on her/him as an active observer and interpreter.

The video that shows Berardi talking about his book *After the Future* is divided into several sections: futurism, the end of the future, post-futurism, ungrowth, singularity, precarization, semiocapital and thera-poetry. Under these eight subheadings he argues that, in the past, we have associated the idea of 'the future' with energy, with more speed, strength, consumption, things, work, violence. This constant growth (of economy, capitalism, wealth and accumulation), he argues, has led to an exploitation of our lives. He finds the solution to the problem in 'ungrowth', in 'withdrawal' and in 'slowness of pleasure', since time is not something we can accumulate but only accommodate. 'We do not need more things, we need more time [to live]'.[17] As a time-based medium, often involving pleasure (of slowness), performance lends itself particularly well to this notion of 'retreat' (or pause), as it arrests spectators and performers in the same space at the same time to concentrate on one particular issue, on one particular subject/object. Live performance makes time and space to observe another person (the performer) in detail; it creates a frame to think, to critically reflect on our lives and how they are or should be. Rest, pleasure and time are then the very purposes of performance.

Berardi sees the move from capital (which he defines as the production and transformation of material objects such as iron, metal, steel, cars and things, etc.) to 'semiocapital' (which he defines as the production of capital through immaterial means such as projects, financial figures, words, concepts, simulation, etc.) as leading to an increase and acceleration of information

[17] For the transcript of Berardi's talk please see Appendix 2.

and signs which, in turn, lead to a decline in meaning. In a rather daunting move he connects this loss of meaning to an increase in suffering and mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety, panic and suicide), which, according to him, mark the beginning of the 21st century.

Yet all is not lost as he concludes by drawing our awareness to the potential of the voice as a meeting point of body and meaning. In the end it becomes clear that my decision to use Berardi was a specific choice. In *After the Future,* I make explicit this meeting point of voice and meaning, as I play with the authenticity of two different voices and bodies, arguing that meaning is created also through pauses, intonation, rhythm, tone, gesture, and so forth. Furthermore, in order to counteract the 'precarization' of contemporary life (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3), Berardi brings forth the concept of 'singularity' as the ability to withdraw from the 'homogenization of different lifestyles, different rhythms, different relationships with the world'. 'Singularity is joy becoming yourself'. Singularity is about finding one's own rhythm. In my video work, I aim to show the singularity of the two different performers by placing them next to each other. Through precise editing, and as they come in and out of sync with each other, it appears as though they are negotiating their different rhythms and relationships with each other. In Dimitrakopoulou's case I suggest that her singularity, her becoming herself, is emphasised through the act of copying another person's voice and body.

4.3 Choreography as Theory – Theory as Choreography

My final point relates to the tension between method (the act of copying) and content (Berardi's arguments), as those two elements can no longer be seen as distinct from each other. I argue with this piece that the question of 'how' a certain artwork is executed (its performance, style and technique) and 'what' is being said remain equally important for the reading of the work. I chose to select Beradi's video for copying because I think he makes important points about the societal issues of our times. By choosing to present this piece as my work, my aim is to both disseminate his ideas but also, and this is crucial, to question them by simultaneously reproducing and transforming them through the act of copying. Ideally, the work should ask the viewer to start a dialogue about both the content as well as the methodology of the work. At the same time, it asks him/her to evaluate copying as both a useful and a problematic tool for making post-conceptual performance work.

As the title of my piece implies, *After the Future* should be read as an homage rather than a mocking pastiche or satirical comment. It takes Berardi's propositions seriously despite the fact that neither the choreographer nor the dancer might necessarily agree with (all of) what is being said. I want to make the point that dealing with Berardi through my work allows for spectators to engage (critically) with ideas he puts forth. This possible disjunction of content and method/form became particularly explicit when Dimitrakopoulou and I presented the piece live at a conference.[18] In the

[18] *Performing Documents* Conference at Arnolfini (Bristol) on 14th April 2013.

question and answer session afterwards, one audience member had clearly not realised (or refused to realise) that Dimitrakopoulou was copying from the screen/headphones, as he kept on asking questions about the content of the talk itself. We were quick to point out that we were unable to answer his questions since these words were not our own but Berardi's. Upon reflection it may have been interesting to carry through this confusion, attempting to give answers 'in the style' of Berardi, anticipating what he would have said in the situation. This situation raises interesting questions of authorship and dissemination as I 'promote' Berardi's work and as my work might, unintentionally, become connected to that of Berardi's.[19]

I have argued in this chapter that *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* is a work that borrows from the work of 'another' (Franco 'Bifo' Berardi) to create a new work. In doing so, the video complicates matters of practice and theory, as it can be read as a dance work that borrows from a work of theory in order to shed new light on that theory and on the multiple ways knowledge is transferred and translated, asking us how we 'read' and how we make meaning from what we see in front of us. I have drawn on ideas concerning the expansion of choreographic performance practice through the shifting role of the choreographer from author to editor, the dancer as copyist, performance as a 'catching up' in time and place and the implications of understanding choreography as a theoretical, as well as practical, field of

[19] I have had a request from a director, who is filming a documentary on Berardi, whether he would be able to include an excerpt of *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* in the film. This raises interesting questions around the dissemination of my artwork in the context of a documentary on the author.

study. These ideas tie back in with the overall argument of this thesis, which understands post-conceptual dance as an expanded practice that not necessarily involves the conventional object of dance: dancing.

5. *Screen Tests*: Choreography as the Practice of Collecting

In the previous chapter I looked at the act of choreography as the practice of editing. In this chapter I will use the figure of the collector to displace the role of the choreographer. I do so by contextualising a project I undertook entitled *Screen Tests*, which took the form of a live performance in a theatre, a live performance in a gallery and which now exists in different formats as a collection of video works. The multiple manifestations of this project problematise the notion of the artwork, questioning what impact context has on the reading and the meaning of a work. The *Screen Tests* project asks how an artwork could be produced, positioned and viewed as a dynamic, fluid, mobile process rather than a fixed and stable object.

Marcel Duchamp, the first 'conceptualist', the inventor of the readymade, and arguably one of the most important figures in 20th century modern art history, wrote about the creative involvement not only of the artist, but also of the spectator who 'brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualities and thus adds his contribution to the creative act' (1957, pp.77-78). I argue that my videos are further complicating 'the creative act' as they deal with notions of objecthood, documentation, liveness and the very idea of the singularly authored original artwork. I have already begun to address these issues in the previous chapters and will continue to do so in the chapter that follows this one. I argue for an expanded understanding of the notion of authorship,

spectatorship and documentation, and, ultimately, for choreography and dance as an expanded performance practice.

The practice of collecting has a long cultural history, from Egyptians collecting books for the Library of Alexandria to the 16th century 'curiosity cabinets', to give just two examples. The activities that the collector undertakes (accumulating and bringing or gathering things together) might also point towards the range of psychological, emotional and sexual aspects of collecting. Walter Benjamin writes in 'Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting' (published 1969) about the act of collecting as a re-connecting with an unfulfilled past, since the collector reconstructs and rewrites the history of an object (in his case the book) and with care and responsibility projects it forward into the unknown future. The art of collecting is then also a creative project, with the collector turning into an author, as she/he fills an empty space by writing her/his narrative of a particular object and by establishing a context for the object in which it can be read.

I started the project on collecting as choreography with the intention of exploring several questions that had emerged from my concerns in Chapter 1. One of these questions relates to the problem of 'presence' and how presence could possibly be 'collected'. Tim Etchells has said that there is no 'such a thing as "simply being there", just being present', suggesting instead that presence is a 'kind of construction' with different layers (2006, p.184). How then do I construct myself through my own and another's image? How can I respond to the further problem of performing, which always entails

being object and subject at the same time? How can I choreograph an encounter between a person on screen and a person in front of the screen? How can I capture different ways of being together? How can I do this without using the whole of the body, but only the face (a further denial of dance's conventional medium)?

The *Screen Tests* project is a series of experiments that complicates the tension between live, mediated and recorded performance, questioning the immediacy of the live and revealing video as a tool for creating different forms of exchange between both performer and spectator. More specifically, the choreographed short films question what it means to be (a)live, to be oneself, to be present(ed), to be with (and in front of) others and a camera. The project asks when, where and who the object (of and in performance) is. One of the most obvious denials of the object can be found in the misleading naming of the work. The *Screen Tests* are not screen tests at all. They were never intended to be used as screen tests in the original meaning of the word. Traditionally, a screen test is a method of determining the suitability of an actor for performing on film and/or in a particular role. The performer is generally given a scene, or selected lines and actions, and instructed to perform in front of a camera to test their suitability. The relevant casting director then evaluates the screen tests. In the case of my project, the 'evaluation' is up to the spectator who is, metaphorically speaking, placed in charge of the selection process instead of a (casting) director. If anything, my *Screen Tests* are tests to be used to make a film that will never happen.

5.1 *Screen Tests*: A Genealogy

The initial version of *Screen Test* (note the singular) was a thirty-minute piece for two performers, namely Stephanie McMann and Clarissa Sacchelli and it was presented at The Performance Hub in Walsall on 4th October 2012. The piece questions what it means to be 'live' and 'present' in front of others and utilises video as part of the process, a process that produces simultaneously the outcome. My interest in the project lay in the relationship between process and product and the circumstances of production of a performance work. I wanted to explore how the process could become part of the work instead of being prior to it. In the case of *Screen Test*, the audience saw how the piece was constructed from ‘rehearsal’ to ‘final performance’. I wanted to bring forth the idea that liveness is a frame (in the mind of the audience) and play with the tension between distance and connection that this framing creates.

The piece therefore complicates and plays with two fundamental elements of performance: time (what is ‘past’ and what is ‘present’) and place (what is ‘there’ and what is ‘here’). In order to stress this point I made the decision that there would be no live performance on the stage of the theatre, instead the performance would take place in a rehearsal studio next door.
The process of rehearsal/performance was projected onto a screen in the theatre via a live feed. Next to the live feed was a second screen that interspersed the live feed with one-minute episodes of recorded video, filmed in my living room, in which I speak to the camera, directly addressing the audience in the theatre. In these clips I play with the traditions of theatre, the

realities of performance, the possibilities of new technologies, complicating notions of space and time, presence and liveness. One example of the text reads as follows:

> The place that I'm in, right now, is not a very big room. But it is not small either. It has a screen, a music system, a piano and black curtains. Actually, it is not that dissimilar from the room that you are sitting in. Can you see the black curtain? Can you see the screen? Can you see the music system? Turn around. Can you see the person in the box? That's Pat, our technician. Give him a wave, it will make him smile. You can see Pat but we can't. And we can't see you. And you can't see us.

Whilst the audience was watching these short recorded video clips, my performers and I filmed the ten one-minute *Screen Tests* in one-minute intervals in the rehearsal studio. This cut between live feed and recorded video happened ten times, lasting for twenty minutes in total. When my performers and I had finished our scheduled ten takes, we took the camera into the auditorium, handed it to the technician who plugged it into a projector, and watched the ten-minute edited *Screen Test* together with the audience. We saw the 'outcome' of what we had created in the studio for the first time at this point, so together with the audience we were in a mutual position of the unknown. I wanted to eliminate post-production choices, for example by avoiding the temptation to select 'favour bits' as it so often happens through the process of editing in video works. By doing so the aim was to deny the possibility of any artistic reflection by the author/choreographer prior to the presentation of the work and to delay creative judgement until the moment of reception, therefore placing the performer, choreographer and spectator in a similar position of 'not-knowing'.

Although I felt that my ideas for the *Screen Test* worked well conceptually, upon reflection and especially taking the audience into consideration, I was unsure whether a thirty-minute sit-down performance was the most appropriate format for this work, particularly considering that in the first twenty minutes of the performance not a whole lot happens. I therefore decided to rework the piece into a second instalment entitled *Screen Test (Test)*, which was performed by Stephanie McMann and Flora Wellesley Wesley. It took place at Stamford Works, a warehouse space in Dalston (London), used as studio, gallery and event venue, on 16th April 2013. I was invited to take part in a weeklong group exhibition, which took as an underlying concept the idea that everything that was going to be exhibited would have to be produced during the private view, therefore turning a blank studio space into an exhibition in the span of three hours. This worked well for me in terms of the idea of simultaneous production and performance/reception and so I took the opportunity to adapt the *Screen Test* project for a gallery setting. This time, rather than being tied to their seats for a set duration, the visitors were free to walk around the space, ignore us, watch us work or interact with us (except when we were busy filming). As it was quite busy some visitors completely missed our performance/installation as we were slightly tucked away in a corner of the room. After the twenty minutes of alternating shooting and resting, we plugged the camera directly into a TV, where the *Screen Test* would be shown on a loop for the entirety of the exhibition.

I titled the resulting video piece *Screen Test (Renouncement),* as it was both a betrayal of the initial idea of the simultaneous construction and deconstruction of a performance (the video/outcome was deleted immediately after the performance in the theatre), and the starting point for the expansion (or shift) of the project into a video work. Besides being interested in issues of transparency and visibility, I was also interested in the issue of time and place and the moment of performance: When is performance? When do we perform, when do we rest? When are we performing, when are we just 'being ourselves'? Thus, these questions critique traditional ideas of performance and reiterate my preoccupations articulated at the beginning of the chapter around the tensions between live and recorded, liveness and presence.

Wanting to explore these questions further I expanded the project by incorporating more people, or rather *test subjects*, into it. Instead of leaving the work as a singular, specific manifestation of an idea, I wanted to include more characters, more personalities, more faces in order to create a collection of *Screen Tests*. Between May and July 2013 I recorded twenty more screen tests. All in all, the entire project involved forty different people (twenty-four professional performers and sixteen 'non-performers') from a variety of backgrounds, ages and nationalities, who participated in the project via an open call and by invitation. My relationship with these people varied, some were friends, others colleagues, friends of friends, acquaintances and people I met for the first time for the purpose of the project. Some of the couples in the videos knew each other well, others did not, some were

friends, partners and/or colleagues, and others met for the first time on the day of the filming.

For presentation purposes the original twenty *Screen Tests* were compiled into *Screen Tests I* and *Screen Tests II*, each comprising ten different one-minute extracts from each of the *Screen Tests*, creating an entirely new work. These two videos were presented at two different events and in two different formats. Once they were placed like diptychs on two screens next to each other in a theatre and once on opposite walls in a performance event in a basement bar.[20] Both times this created a situation in which four, rather than two, people were in different constellations to each other. By positioning the videos in different relation to each other, I became aware of the impact this had on how the videos were viewed by observers. In the theatre there was a clear separation between the screens and the audience and subsequently a distance was created. In the basement bar the screens were placed opposite each other (they almost seemed to dialogue) with the audience in between. This forced spectators to make decisions on how to view the videos. They either had to switch between screens or focus on one wall in particular; hence a more active viewing experience was created. No matter what decision they took, it always meant that they missed part of the video and this in turn highlighted the fact that everyone had a different experience with multiple possibilities of interpretation.

[20] Namely, as part of ChaChaCha at Chisenhale Dance Space on 1st November 2013 and as part of Smash Lab XIII at The Book Club on 4th February 2014.

The third, and final, version of the project, *Screen Tests (Multitudes)*, sees the collection of twenty videos edited into one screen. As the different 'squares' are placed next to each other they suggest connections, disconnections, relations and non-relations between people. This again creates opportunities for viewers to make up their own story about what is presented in front of them. One could say that the whole series of works, *Screen Test, Screen Test (Test)* and *Screen Test (Renouncement)*, *Screen Tests* and *Screen Tests (Multitudes),* are downplaying the live and highlighting the recorded. Not only are these works presented in different spaces, contexts, venues and installations utilising different forms of media (namely live performance, live feed and video), but also, as a series of works, these pieces are moving and morphing from one version to the next, always practising their *being different*, and their *different being*.

Conceptualised as a collection, the *Screen Tests* can be recombined to create twenty unique *Screen Tests* (without using any one-minute take twice), and many more if one was to change the parameters. Each different version has the potential for changing narratives and shifting meanings depending on the combinations and connections of people. In *Screen Tests (Multitudes)* the individual squares can be placed in a variety of relations to each other. Ric Allsopp has written on performance's potential to resist a 'singular coherence of the artwork' (2007 p.12). He writes, '"[m]eaning" does not reside in the artwork but in its performance, its dissemination/dispersal across multiple contexts, which continually re-activates (and subverts and destabilizes) the work' (2007, p.12). I therefore see the *Screen Tests* project

not as a finished work but as open, representing multitudes of relations, which are changing depending on the presentation, dissemination and contextualisation in each particular instance, rather than a finished product.

5.2 (Re)turning to Warhol

The project was inspired by Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* from the 1960s with Nico, Edie Sedgwick, Lou Reed and other famous and unknown people. According to Henry M. Sayre, Andy Warhol is not the most obvious person to cite in relation to practices of performance, as his work occupies an ambiguous place between commerce and critique in art history (1989). Sayre writes in his introduction to *The Object of Performance:* '[Warhol] collapses the distinction between the commodity status of the work [...] and its avant-garde function as an attack on that commodity status' (1989, p.33). It is precisely this confusion and contradiction that I am drawn to in his work and the reason why I wanted to use his work (in particular his *Screen Test*s), since it raises questions about the function of art.

Though Warhol was best known for his artistic practices, he was also a passionate and informed collector of a vast variety of objects, from antiques to receipts, as John Smith's book *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting* (2002) reveals. As well as collecting objects, Warhol was also 'a people collector', as Gerard Malanga (one of Warhol's collaborators) noted (in Shore and Tillman, 1995, p.45). Between 1964-1966 Warhol filmed 472 individual *Screen Tests* (Angell, 2006). Even though all the *Screen Tests* look different, they share common conceptual and aesthetic elements, such

as the fact that they were all shot on a 16mm Bolex movie camera on a tripod, lasting just under three minutes each. These black and white silent close-ups of people followed a series of simple rules (which were not always obeyed): the camera should be stationary, without zooming in or out, the background should be as plain as possible, the sitter well lit and positioned centrally in the frame facing forward, sitting as still and motionless as possible, without talking or smiling and even trying not to blink (Angell, 2006). Conceptually, Warhol thought of the screen tests as film portraits or portrait films, sometimes called 'stillies' (Angell, 2006, p.15). The shortness, simplicity, directness and immediacy of Warhol's video collection is both fascinating and unsettling as they foreground the tension(s) between the real and the fake, exposure and intimacy, movement and stillness.

One of the obvious differences that distinguish Warhol's project from mine is the placing of two people next to each other. I therefore think of the films as duets rather than portraits. It is important to point out from the beginning that my *Screen Tests* (2013) are not intended to be read as reproductions or re-enactments but rather as dialoguing with Warhol's project almost fifty years later. The use of 'Warholian colours' as filters and the music by The Velvet Underground (the American rock band that Warhol managed), which I use in some of the *Screen Tests* but later abandon, as they seem to distract from the actual experience of watching, give reference points but are not the main focus of the work.

The videos were choreographed using a 'script' created from a series of one-minute tasks.[21] These tasks were separated into two categories: everyday actions such as wearing sunglasses, eating a banana (with a nod to Warhol) or brushing teeth (an action that everyone does daily but that everyone does differently) and basic states of being human, namely feeling bored, cool, sad, happy, nervous, excited and confused. One of the reasons why I wanted to use these expressions was because they are used in psychological tests to determine conditions such as autism. In these tests, patients are shown various different human faces on a screen one after the other. These faces show emotions such as sadness, anger, happiness, fear, etc. The patients then need to match the right face with the right emotion, a task which people with autism struggle with.

I have continually returned in my practice to stillness or minimal movement, not as the opposite or 'other' of movement but as an integral part of how we think about mobility and immobility in dance, and in our lives. With the *Screen Tests* I aim to capture the experience of living, but I am acutely aware that the only thing I can collect are moments, small periods of time, glimpses of being and of beings, short (but telling) insights into people's personalities and behaviour. The *Screen Tests* present time as fragmented and interrupted, as speeding up and slowing down, as inconsistent instances rather than a continuously flowing movement. By doing so the films are questioning the continuity of presence and, even though they are videos,

[21] Please see Appendix 3.

point to performance's inability to fully present itself at any given point (Phelan, 1993).

Even though the *Screen Tests* are not proper tests in the sense of 'auditioning' people for taking part in a future film project, these films are testing the subject nevertheless. Without an obvious aim, they ask subjects to engage with the task of being/performing themselves, sustaining a pose and presenting an image, whilst continuously confronting a camera. The paradox between being and performing lies in the fact that the subject is performing herself/himself as her/his own image whilst at the same time being reduced to exactly that: a (moving) image.

Arguably, my *Screen Tests* form a less stylised, less rigid, strict and rigorous framework than Warhol's *Screen Tests*. The subjects in my *Screen Tests* are free to move around and are asked to play with the gap between being oneself and 'performing'. They are 'posing in an un-posing way' without 'targeted agenda or particular aspiration', as Jamila Johnson-Small writes in a review of my work (2014, online). At the same time they may (or may not) be aware of the person next to them and form a relationship with the camera. Whereas Warhol's *Screen Tests* are a direct confrontation between the subject of the test and the spectator/viewer, my duets are designed to be more casual but equally intense, as the performers are asked to play with looking into and away from the camera.

These moments when performers are directly looking into the camera, directly addressing the spectator, are intended as subtle 'shocking' moments in which the spectator is reminded that she/he is looking at a person and that this person is looking back at her/him, interrupting the seemingly safe contemplation of another being on the screen. These moments are intended to question the way one 'normally' looks at another person's face, allowing the spectator to 'really look at someone' without this someone becoming offended or otherwise disturbed. The spectators are therefore free to look, since they know that there will be no response and the performer is freed from the need for reciprocal gazing.[22] The *Screen Tests* project highlights the participation of the viewer in the artwork by giving him/her the possibility to create his/her own meaning from what is presented on the screen. The intentions of the creator/maker/author/choreographer take a secondary position, since the idiosyncratic connection(s) or relationship(s) that each individual viewer can establish with the work are foregrounded. As the choreographer-turned-collector, I ask the viewer, how do the *Screen Tests* make you feel: Sad? Happy? Nervous? Excited? Confused? Bored?

Throughout this chapter I have used the figure of the collector in order to displace the role of the choreographer. I have done this by contextualising my long-time (one-and-a-half year) project *Screen Tests*, which took the form of a live performance in a theatre, a live performance in a gallery and which now exists in different formats as a collection of video works. The multiple

[22] This situation is different from the event of live performance, in which there is a mutual relationship of dependency between the spectator and performer.

manifestations of this project problematise the notion of the artwork, questioning what impact context has on the reading and the meaning of a work. As for the collection, it is always contingent, a specific, unique arrangement of objects marked by their individuality. The *Screen Tests* are a collection of expanded choreographic objects that have the ability to morph from one version to another, depending on the context and format of presentation and on the particular relationship that each individual viewer builds with her/his (screen test) subject.

6. *Learning about the 60s:* Choreography as the Practice of Reframing

The previous chapter looked at the role of the choreographer from the position of the collector. In this final analysis I suggest looking at the act of choreography as the practice of reframing. I will do so by contextualising a video titled *Learning about the 60s,* which is a piece that came out of a practice-based research project that I undertook together with three second year BA dance students in March 2012. Within a time period of four weeks (thirty hours) we looked at different creative strategies and choreographic methods and processes for reframing *Trio A* (1966) by Northern American choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer. The project initially set out as an enquiry into the relationship between movement and language, which arises from a broader preoccupation of mine that is concerned with how we create meaning from what we see or hear when we watch performance (and which I have discussed in Chapter 4). Over the duration of the project and as I started to question the piece's prominent place in post-modern dance history and its legacy and relevance to contemporary dance practices, the focus shifted to an investigation around ontology.

There are several specific research questions that emerged for me in the course of the project: How can I offer an alternative reading of *Trio A*, one that goes beyond what we already know about it? How can I dialogue with this 'object' that has primarily presented itself to me as video documentation? If *Trio A* has become an object, how can I comment on the fetish of *Trio A*?

How can I challenge, destabilise and/or interrupt the 'thingness' of *Trio A*? How do I place my work next to Rainer's, literally?

6.1 The Ephemeral Object

Through this specific project, I sought to address issues of ephemerality, documentation, archive, history and memory, which are core concerns for 'preserving' dance and securing its future. One of the challenges to traditional textual discourse has been to accept and validate the body as archive. The desire to document live performance is grounded in the fear that 'without efforts to preserve the history and heritage of the art form it will forever languish as trivial and not worthy of serious research' (Potter in Reason, 2008, p.83-84). There is a tension or gap between the official record, mostly archived by dominant institutions, or in the form of a history written by critics, and the embodied experience and memories of the performers, which are hard to preserve or document and which are often thought of as ephemeral and non-reproducible knowledge (Rubidge, 2001).

Matthew Reason advances an argument against objectivity, accuracy and completion and instead speaks in favour of mutability and fluidity in the construction of the archive. He contests the idea of the archive being 'complete', 'authentic', 'neutral' or 'objective', instead he conveys the idea of 'the archive as empty, the researcher actively creating meaning, rather than simply finding it in the archive: the researcher is also constructing, selecting, editing, and speaking for the archive' (2008, p.85). Indeed, if we agree with Reason's conclusion that 'if you value live performance because of its

liveness, then memory must be a more appropriate site for any trace or afterlife than the frozen and unchanging archive' (2008, p.87), we might ask whether we could see the choreographer and dancer, in her/his expanded role, as a 're-framer' who absorbs, stores and disseminates knowledge through her/his body. A traditional approach to archiving often tends to want to fix events or objects as discrete instances in order to make sense of them, whereas this performative approach suggests that all meaning is contingent. One could say that the 'object' of *Trio A* lies in the subjective (aesthetic) experience of spectators and performers.

6.2 The *Trio A* case: Once more, with difference

Trio A is such an interesting work to look at because it is, and simultaneously is not, a 'thing', as I will explore in this chapter. On the one hand it is certainly an object with a fixed and distinguishable character, style, label and history attached. On the other hand, as it is continuously reproduced, represented, reconstructed, reinterpreted, re-enacted, re-performed and *re-framed* throughout the years, *Trio A* also exceeds being an object, as it exists in multiple bodies. This idea undermines the argument that *Trio A* can ever fully be present as a 'thing' or object. On the contrary I argue that the piece can only ever be present partially, existing in a tension between absence and presence.

In the context of this research project on post-conceptual dance and the expansion of choreographic performance practice, *Trio A* is a crucial piece to engage with, as it represents a critical moment in dance history which

opened many doors for future critical engagement with the art form by asking questions about the nature, significance and potentiality of dance and choreography. Its specificity and set character (it has a definite order and structure) allows for an in-depth analysis unlike other pieces of the era that are based on scores, tasks and improvisation. As a piece that is short but complex in content and movement material, *Trio A* can be read as a critique of everything that came before in terms of dance history, but it is also preoccupied with its own time and ideas (for example everyday 'pedestrian' movement), all of which are 'quoted' in the dance. As Carrie Lambert-Beatty sharply observes: '[t]he movement of *Trio A*, however inventive and unusual, is haunted by images of dances past. Here, the ghost of an arabesque or a rond-de-jambe, there something that looks suspiciously like a Graham contraction or a Cunningham quirk of the leg' (1999, p.106). *Trio A* is one example of a work that stands for a period of new ideas in the 1960s, and it can be argued that it 'represents' a group of dancers/choreographers (Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, Douglas Dunn, and others) and their (post-modern) beliefs at the time. *Trio A* is probably the best-known choreography from the Judson Church era, and according to Sally Banes 'the signal work both for Rainer and for the entire post-modern dance' (1987, p.44).

The four-and-a-half minute to six-and-a-half minute solo (depending on the dancer's timing and physical inclination) was first performed as a trio by Rainer, David Gordon and Steve Paxton, who were dressed in casual clothes and trainers, as part of an evening titled *The Mind Is a Muscle, Part I* at the

Judson Church on 10th January 1966 (Rainer, 2009, p.12). Later that year it was performed as *Lecture,* in which Peter Saul executed a balletic solo version with pirouettes and jumps, and in the final version in 1968 it was performed by Rainer in tap shoes (ibid). Since then it has been performed on numerous occasions, two of which Rainer refers to frequently in articles and interviews. It was performed by Rainer, who was recovering from a serious illness at the time and was thus dressed all in white (referring to hospital dress code), as a solo titled *Convalescent Dance* at Angry Arts Week in 1967 (ibid). In 1970 it was performed at the opening of the *People's Flag Show,* where Rainer and four others danced it nude with five-foot American flags tied around their necks. This was a protest against the arrest of the gallery owner Stephen Radich, who had been accused of 'desecrating' the American flag (ibid, p.13). I give these selected examples to emphasise the breadth of contexts in which the piece was performed and in order to highlight the potential for multiple meanings that the piece brings forth.

When one looks at the dance historical context of the work, *Trio A* can be read as a statement against notions of the spectacular, the theatrical, the virtuosic and the elitist in dance. It can be read as a critique of the technically demanding, disciplined and rigorous training regime, one that values the aesthetic of the expressive body against dance as an intellectually demanding practice. Banes has argued that with this piece Rainer turned dance from something breathtaking, admirable and specialist into an action that anyone and any *body* can do (1987, 1993). The dance artists that worked as part of the Judson Dance Theatre were deeply suspicious of the

notion of dance as a form of expression of the body, or a (special) form of non-verbal communication with the audience. Furthermore, *Trio A* can be interpreted as the antithesis to the theatricality of the minimal sculptures and installations of Rainer's once partner Robert Morris, which demand a physical engagement from the viewer. In contrast, it can be argued that the choreography of *Trio A* does not ask the viewer for her/his physical commitment. This often paradoxical relationship between sculpture and dance and the interdisciplinary nature of artistic practice in the 1960s is an important reference point for my project on the expansion of the object, as it marks the beginning of an engagement between material and choreographic artistic practices.

Since it functions as a crucial interdisciplinary reference point, *Trio A* has received a considerable amount of attention from various fields, for example dance historians (Banes 2003, 1993, 1987; Burt 2009, 2006; Franko 1997), curators (Wood 2007), choreographer-philosophers (Sigman, 2000), art historians (Bryan-Wilson 2012; Lambert-Beatty 2008, 1999), art philosophers (Carroll 2003), but also from Rainer herself in *A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A* (1968). As *Trio A* becomes more and more recognised for its importance for dance and art history it also becomes a fetish, an object, a product, a fixed moment in time.

This is particularly true when we look at the rigour and insistence on precision with which *Trio A* is currently passed on and which seems paradoxical to its initial proposal from the 1960s. In fact Rainer herself is aware of this contradiction between the ethos of the dance in the 1960s, which models itself on notions of participation and non-elitism, and its current status as an iconic canonical piece of dance history. She writes:

> In the spirit of the 1960s a part of me would like to say, "Let it go." Why try to cast it in stone? Why am I now so finicky and fastidious, so critical of my own performance, so autocratic about the details—the hands go this way, not that way, the gaze here, not there, the feet at this angle, not that? In the last decade I have become far more rigorous—some might call it obsessive—not only with respect to the qualifications of those whom I allow to teach the dance but in my own transmission of its peculiarities. In the presence of the Laban notators in the summer of 2003, it became increasingly clear to me that here was an opportunity to set the record as straight as possible and forget, at least for the moment, my scruples and caveats about fetishization and immortality. (2009, p.17)

Rainer is aware of the dilemma yet falls into a trap by desiring *Trio A*'s 'thing-ness', by insisting that it is only taught by qualified and authorised teachers and by demanding that dancers undergo a workshop and rehearsals (and in some cases an audition) before they are allowed to perform it in public. It is important to note Rainer's relief, in the quote above, about the fact that *Trio A* now exists through Labanotation. This system of dance notation is an accurate method of recording movement, yet only few dancers and choreographers can actually read and interpret it.

The other way of recording movement is photographic and video documentation. *Trio A* was documented by Banes in 1978 (12 years after its initial performance), yet Rainer insists that one cannot learn the dance from

the video. Her resistance seems largely based on her dissatisfaction with her own performance in the video, as she could not physically execute certain movements like she wanted (Rainer, 2009). Her 'vanity' raises interesting questions about documentation, archive, preservation and legacy in dance particularly; issues that play a key role within this research project, and in this chapter in particular. It is understandable that Rainer's specific memory of the actual performance in 1966 clashes with the recorded performance, yet I argue that this clash is apparent to her alone. Most people who did not have the privilege of witnessing the performances of the piece in the 1960s and 1970s will come across *Trio A* via the video documentation which readily exists on YouTube.[23] As part of my project with the dance students I wanted to work out what happens when one attempts to learn *Trio A* from the video. I therefore proposed to the three dancers to learn the dance (to the best of their abilities) from the YouTube video within the self-imposed time frame of eight hours.

In the process of learning it became quickly apparent that one important feature of the dance is the use of the gaze or focus. As Rainer says herself, '[t]wo primary characteristics of the dance are its uninflected continuity and its imperative involving the gaze' (2009, p.12). In *Trio A* the eyes of the dancers never meet the audience, as Rainer has carefully choreographed the movement of the head and uses devices such as looking down or closing the eyes in order to follow the task she set for herself. Theoretically, the

[23] Please see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZwj1NMEE-8 [Accessed 13 April 2014].

denial of the gaze meeting the 'Other' is to be equated with the denial of an easy, straightforward relationship between performer and audience. In *Trio A* there is no acknowledgement from the performer that this is a performance, in the sense that it is a special kind of activity to be looked at and differentiated from the rest of the activities in the world. The denial of a relationship with the audience suggests to me that *Trio A* cannot be seen as an art object. Rather, it would be more appropriate to see *Trio A* as a way of doing, or rather being (in the gallery, on a stage, in the world).

In Rainer's original programme notes of the piece she states her ambitions for the dance: 'I wanted it to remain undynamic movement, no rhythm, no emphasis, no tension, no relaxation. You just *do* it' (1974, p.71). This task-based performance of *Trio A* refers to the mode of performance rather than an actual, task-based movement vocabulary, as the material itself is indeed quite challenging to learn and perform. Pat Catterson, one of Rainer's official transmitters of *Trio A,* who has performed it in various different contexts in Europe and the Northern America over the last forty years and who also knows a 'retrograde' (backwards) version, points out the liberation that the performers must have felt when they did it back in the 1960s: 'It was a different definition of performing for me – that is, performing as just normal doing, not a special way or being that happens when one is on stage' (2009, p.4).

6.3 Documentation, the Gaze and Dancing History

As I was pondering about the task-like activity, the 'non-performance', the denial of the gaze, the continuity of movement and the issue of documentation of *Trio A*, I began to think about how I could both emphasise as well as critically interrogate the multiple, and contradictory, manifestations of the iconic piece. After the eight-hour rehearsal time was over, I decided to tape a camera to a different body part of each dancer (leg, arm and stomach) and to record a performance of *Trio A* from the perspective of each dancer's body. This way of using the camera resulted in an unedited 6'36" video piece, which I titled *Learning about the 60s*. With the piece I intended to ask questions around ownership (who owns the piece), authorship (who is the author of the piece – Rainer or myself), gaze (it is hard to watch the piece as a spectator but in a different way than watching *Trio A* is)[24], (non-) performance (the dancers are talking to each other as they are trying to help each other remember the movements), continuous movement (the actual movements of the dancer's body are amplified by the camera often producing jerky and sudden changes and breaks) and documentation (I suggest that the piece is not documentation, but a distinct artwork in itself). At the same time the project as a whole aimed to question what it means to practise *Trio A*, what is means to learn and perform it. In the piece I suggest *Trio A* as a process, a method, a concept, a frame and a way of thinking. As the title playfully suggests, *Learning about the 60s* draws attention to the

[24] One audience member told me that she became motion sick when watching the piece.

embodied experience of studio-based learning (so-called 'learning-by-doing') and acknowledges experiential knowledge as a valid form of research.

Lambert-Beatty, who calls Rainer 'a sculptor of spectatorship' (2008, p.9), makes a crucial point about embodied experience and the paradoxical nature of the body, as it is both exterior and interior, it sees and it is also seen. *Learning about the 60s* is an attempt to show exactly this paradox. It attempts to show what it must feel like to dance *Trio A*. It is shot from the dancer's point of view and gives us her perspective of the space. We see the world from her point of view, through her eyes. The viewer is invited to occupy and share a privileged 'inside' perspective, an internal space. Through the choreography of the camera the piece attempts to bring the viewer closer to the experience of dancing rather than making an attempt at any accurate reconstruction of *Trio A*. In the actual footage however we get an external rather than an internal view through the external viewpoint of the camera filming the space. In *Learning about the 60s* we can hardly see any actual 'dance steps', but what we are left with is the movement of the camera. During the six minutes we never actually see the dancing body fully. The only things we see are body parts and fragments of movements. This emphasises the difficulty of the dance to fully appear or to be present. This partial presence is emphasised in *Learning about the 60s,* as there is no repetition (the same as in *Trio A*). Repetition makes a dance more object-like, more present, since we can grasp a structure, possibly a beginning and an end, which helps us to follow better and to see the actual material easier. In *Learning about the 60s* we are denied this pleasure.

Conceptually, the piece draws attention to the circumstances of its production (by which I mean the situation in which dance is traditionally taught, learned and rehearsed) and proposes the dance studio as a place where the dance happens (rather than on stage). The video makes visible the work that went into learning *Trio A* (you can literally hear the dancers trying to remember the movements) and by doing so it shows the production, the labour and the effort associated with performing the choreography. It proposes the dance studio as a performative place and a performance space, a site that is more about progress and process than about a final product.

Furthermore, and to come back to the beginning of this chapter, the video illustrates the role of the choreographer as 're-framer'. She is to be there, to be present, but not to manipulate, to command, to control. She has no preconceived idea and no real choice over how the outcome will look like. She surrenders her authority in order to give space for different kinds of possibilities to emerge; possibilities and connections that she might not have thought of before. Unexpectedly, *Learning about the 60s* is the antithesis to *Trio A*. Whereas in *Trio A* movement is approached from an analytic and minimal point of view, *Learning about the 60s* is emotional and excessive. Whereas in *Trio A* dance is approached from a structured, clear and precise point of view, *Learning about the 60s* is physical, chaotic and messy. If in *Trio A* movement is hard to see due to its non-repetition and 'out-of-syncness' (especially when performed as a trio), *Learning about the 60s* is

even more impossible to see. In *Learning about the 60s* it is difficult, if not impossible, to follow or even make out the movements from *Trio A*. One can catch a few glimpses, a few hints and traces here and there.

6.4 *Trio A* remains

Yet, I want to highlight that it is both in the traces as well as in the practice of *Trio A*, in its rehearsal, repetition and duration that the full potential of the dance lies. Julia Bryan-Wilson proposes *Trio A* as a 'complex discursive site that invites, demands, and necessitates practice' (2012, p.65) or in the words of Catterson: 'learning and doing this dance can give some understanding of it in a way that nothing you read or see about it can. Its history is embodied in its doing' (2009, p.10). It might be used as a pedagogical tool for performers and non-performers alike, since it requires a continuous process of learning from both. Non-dancers might be learning complex movements, which are technically demanding and difficult to coordinate, whereas dancers might be challenging their training and performing habits and question their perceptions about what dance and dancing means to them (Bryan-Wilson, 2012). In this way, *Trio A* accumulates value through its persistence in time, as Jens Giersdorf states: '*Trio A* exists as a true living archive of an era through its continuous performances, but more importantly it requires a transmission from body to body reminiscent of oral cultures' (2009, p.23).

Similarly, we might attend to Rainer's well-known *no manifesto* (1965), which she wrote one year before choreographing *Trio A,* and her *A Manifesto Reconsidered* (2008) as a prime example of how particular meanings depend

on the changing historical context and how understanding is reframed over time:

***No Manifesto*, 1965**	***A Manifesto Reconsidered*, 2008**
No to spectacle	Avoid if at all possible
No to virtuosity	Acceptable in limited quantity
No to transformation and magic and make-believe	Magic is out; the other two are sometimes tolerable
No to the glamour and transcendence of the star image	Acceptable only as quotation
No to the heroic	Dancers are ipso facto heroic
No to the anti-heroic	Don't agree with that one
No to trash imagery	Don't understand that one
No to involvement of performer or spectator	Spectators: stay in your seats
No to style	Style is unavoidable
No to camp	A little goes a long way
No to seduction of spectators by the wiles of the performer	Unavoidable
No to eccentricity	If you mean "unpredictable", that's the name of the game
No to moving or being moved	Unavoidable

In a self-reflexive move, Rainer brings out the redundancy of her earlier statement and undermines her own thinking forty-three years later. She cleverly shows that statements are never finite; they only mark the thinking at a specific point in time and context. Her engagement with the (her) past shows how (dance) history continuously reflects upon itself and how meaning changes through time. *Trio A* is then, like any other dance, inherently connected to its historical context, as it always represents a particular moment in time. As an artwork it relates to its own history and discourse and

never exists in a vacuum. Adrian Heathfield and Amelia Jones write: 'There is no singular, authentic "original" event we can refer to in order to confirm the true meaning of an event, an act, a performance, or a body' (2012, p.18). *Trio A*'s meaning depends upon its actualisation in time and place and this changes depending on the cultural, social, political and economic contexts that the piece 'lives in or through'. It should therefore not be fixed, cast in stone and validated by the canon. Instead it is imperative that we see the piece as marked by absence(s) and as residing in the bodies and minds of its subjects. These subjects, the performers and spectators, construct their own meaning(s) in the encounter with the work. Therefore we can say that there is never a fixed meaning, only multiple meanings that shift depending on the particular moment in which the performance takes place.

Ramsay Burt speaks of a 'keen and sophisticated, yet idiosyncratic, interest in dance history' amongst younger generations of choreographers and dance-makers (especially Europeans) who occupy themselves with *Trio A* as it 'helps them build on what has already been done and makes them aware of a broader range of creative possibilities' (2009, p.25). Considering myself to be one of these younger Europeans, I would add that going back to investigate past events, learning through history, allows me to see that past, present and future are inherently intertwined and that new knowledge is most often built upon prior knowledge. *Learning about the 60s* is my contribution to an already rich and contradictory history of framing and reframing one particular choreography, a history that is complex and complicated and often resists, a history that produces paradoxes and tensions for the discipline of

dance and beyond. And so it is with fascination but also with frustration that I continue to get involved with the seemingly endless and multiple potentialities, permutations and appearances of *Trio A,* as a choreographer turned ‘re-framer’.

7. The Future of Dance: Choreography as the Practice of Curating

The aim of this project was to explore the manifold relationships between dance and its objecthood. As a practice-led research project it aimed to do so both through the written thesis and through artistic practice, which is here presented as a series of video projects that extend representations of dance, namely *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* (2012), *Learning about the 60s* (2012), *Screen Tests* (2013) and *The End of Choreography* (2013). The central research question of this project was firstly concerned with understanding post-conceptual dance as a practice that denies its own object and, following up on this, understanding current choreographic performance practice (including my own) as a form of expansion of this object. The dimension of this expansion is threefold; firstly, it expands the discipline of dance (questioning what dance is, where it takes place and what forms it takes), secondly, it expands the role of the choreographer (questioning what s/he does, where s/he works and how s/he works), and thirdly, it expands the object (questioning what is defined as object).

I have traced in my thesis the permutation of the 'object' from choreographer to spectator (Chapter 2), participant (Chapter 3), editor (Chapter 4), collector (Chapter 5), and 're-framer' (Chapter 6), arguing for the multiplicity of roles that choreographers, and by extension dancers, take on at the beginning of the 21st century. In lieu of a conclusion, I will make one final displacement by claiming choreography as the practice of curating.

My interdisciplinary research draws from a variety of theoretical discourses including performance theory, visual cultures and critical theory, and is therefore both relevant to the field of dance studies and beyond the discipline. The project resides in the gaps and tensions between practice and theory, performance and documentation, language and dance, text and movement, choreography and objecthood. Having moved (often swiftly) between these different fields, conventions and terminologies, I conclude that the gaps between the different art forms and discourses are not as wide as suspected. I ask to what extent it is important, for the purposes of this project at least, to distinguish between the terms ‘art’ and ‘performance’, ‘dance’ and ‘art’, ‘performance’ and ‘dance’, ‘choreographer’ and ‘artist’, and ‘spectator’ and ‘visitor/viewer’. The performance work that I have discussed in this thesis breaks the idea of the traditional proscenium theatre experience by being presented in a space where interaction is more easily possible (BADco.), whereas the artwork discussed challenges the idea of observing an ‘object’ by presenting performers/dancers/participants/interpreters in galleries interacting with visitors (Tino Sehgal). In the end, the active relationship between spectator/viewer and artwork turns the experience into one of *performance* (or one of theatre, as Fried wrote in *Art and Objecthood* (1969)).

I have argued throughout the thesis and through this research project that dance denies itself as object precisely because it has no object. Dance’s ephemeral qualities do away with objects, instead placing subjects, people and interactions at the core of its practice and discourse. My own artistic practice has been rooted in a deconstructive approach to making

choreographic work and has been grounded in the post-modernist notion that there is no such thing as an art object. This underlying approach renders the idea of any specific time and place of the art object redundant, instead placing emphasis on the expanded notion of practice that I have explored through this research project. Furthermore, I have suggested throughout this thesis that we cannot do away with objects entirely and that instead we should hold onto and rethink the object (of dance, but also of art) in expanded terms. I am convinced that the value of an artwork is not intrinsic to the work itself; it is always dependent on the social relations and discourses that it produces. The object of art is therefore never complete in itself; it depends on the perception of the audience and the mediation by language to come into being. It is therefore always dependent on it being read in and through the socio-political circumstances in which it is experienced.

Three further conclusions can be drawn: Firstly, post-conceptual dance at the beginning of the 21st century is no longer a marginal art form existing at the periphery and in the shadow of theatre, performance or visual art practices. It is placed at the centre of art production and will increasingly become important in political and cultural terms. Secondly, and as I have suggested in Chapter 3, as the boundaries between art forms are becoming increasingly fluid, classifications and labels such as choreographer, artist, etc. might be becoming less relevant in the future. Similarly, I have tried to show in the choice of chapter titles that choreographic practice can be described essentially as an array of various forms of activity. Thirdly, in order to fully

make use of post-conceptual dance's economic, social and cultural potentials, choreographers and others working in the field need to rethink definitions of what shall be classified as dance, testing the borders between the choreographic and the non-choreographic and look openly towards possible and multiple futures in unclaimed territories.

7.1 Returning to the Spectator

The practice that I submitted as part of this thesis can be understood as several separate and independent pieces of practice rather than a series of experiments or a successive line of research on one topic. My journey through the practice-led research in this thesis has not been linear; rather, it has been an even evolving process that has manifested itself in four distinctive pieces of work. These four instances, which I discuss in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, are related in that they unite under the umbrella term 'expanded choreography' and, as I argue, post-conceptual dance.

There are significant differences in how my practice has changed and transformed during the four-year time period of undertaking this project. I now think differently about the production, medium and presentation of my work. For instance, I came from a place where I was convinced that live performance was the most appropriate way to present my research and practice and that my performance practice depended on the live presence of spectators and performers who would share the same space for a predetermined moment in time. Undertaking the practice-led research project has forced me to rethink this relation and has expanded my thinking in that I

now think that it is possible to have a different, but similarly effective connection between spectators and performers, even if the work is not live.

My work has also changed in that it has become more reductive, stripped and pared down, often focussing on a single idea for each work. As a result, I have become less interested in movement that might easily be defined as dance. Even before I began the PhD I had moved away from compositional choreography and had started to work with simple actions and everyday movements. During the research this reduced even more as I restricted the movement of performers by working in a seated position (*After the Future: A Homage to Bifo*), and ultimately ended up placing two people next to each other on chairs who did not move very much at all (*Screen Tests*). In the final work (*The End of Choreography*) I even decided not to work with the human figure at all, instead using a disembodied voice narrating a series of texts and images. As time progressed I also let go of the idea of necessarily creating 'new' work from scratch and resisted the temptation to create original performance. Instead I chose to literally copy someone else's work (*After the Future: A Homage to Bifo*), to use existing movement material (*Learning about the 60s)* and to select and recombine various found materials (*The End of Choreography*).

A further difference concerns the relationship between process and product. I have started to pay closer attention to how I work with other people as a choreographer and what my role in this creative process is. I have realised that when working with others there is often a residue, or relation, that is

created in the process and which exceeds the format of the work. This ‘other’ will not necessarily be visible in the final product, and might therefore also be invisible to the spectator, but it still has value for the work and its makers.

One final significant shift concerns the role of the spectator. I realised that what I wanted to achieve with my practice was to create an openness in which I could leave more space to the spectator and give more room for imagination. I have moved away from wanting to dictate and prescribe a certain reading or from wanting to convey a clear message. Instead of ‘actively’ and physically involving the spectator, I wanted to create a situation in which there is a more ‘passive’ contemplative engagement between spectator and performer, one that might even be described as ‘critical’ or ‘intellectual’. Furthermore, I am less interested in the spectator staying engaged for the whole duration of the performance; rather, the duration and the emptiness of the work at times allows spectators to escape into their own worlds and to follow lines of thought that allow a varied and diverse interpretation and experience of what they see and what is being presented to them. One could say that my practice has changed from wanting to present some ‘original’ thing through a specific medium, in order to allow for multiple ways of seeing and being seen.

Through my choreographic work I have afforded various relations by using strategies such as copying, editing, reframing, scripting, the use of the camera to (re-)present choreography and ‘hidden’ tasks (for the performers), in order to highlight the impossibility of creating an original work of art.

Moreover, my expanded choreographic performance practice has denied dance its proper object, as I intentionally did not use dance's conventional and primary medium: dancing. Nevertheless, my videos evoke a sense of movement, participation, and/or action in the viewer as she/he encounters the work. The viewer is always implicated in the work, not through participation, activation or direct instruction, but by experiencing a sense of movement indirectly as she/he can imagine herself/himself in the position of the subject. Besides, one must always remember that participation might also purely take place in the imagination. Johnson-Small writes in her review of my *Screen Tests* when it was presented at The Book Club in February 2014: 'I spent a lot of time watching the other watchers framing their faces and imagining their own screen tests' (2014, online). L. Peragine, an audience member, commented on my video work *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* in a personal conversation at the Private View of *The End of Choreography* at Lima Zulu Project Space on 7th March 2014: 'It made me want to try and do some copying myself'.

If the engagement with the spectator brings the work into being, what then is the role of the choreographer? At the very end of his essay, Benjamin creates the image of the collector who disappears into his collection (1969, p.67). I am drawn to this image as it helps me to clarify what I have been trying to achieve through my expanded post-conceptual dance practice: to act as a catalyst, to disappear into my work, to avoid stylisation, to erase my own choreographic signature, to conceal my identity with the help of others

(Berardi, Dimitrakopoulou, Warhol, all my screen test subjects, Rainer, etc), and yet to be present through my work in a quiet and latent way.

My work illustrates that performance (be it live or recorded) happens neither in the minds of the spectators nor in the bodies of the performers. Rather, it exists in the space(s) in between. It is not a stable or fixed object but an expanded process of performance, which changes constantly and depends on relations for its realisation. Furthermore, the use of specific technological tools (such as cameras, laptops and headphones) calls the object into question, as these devices create distance between viewer and object, between spectator and performer. Overall my work suggests that the spectator/viewer/observer is simultaneously the subject and the object of the artwork. It is through the engagement and negotiation with the viewer that the work exists in the first place. The viewer is an integral part of the work as she/he continuously gives meaning to what she/he sees, independently of the author's intention. In this way my work seeks to actively engage the viewer in an expanded practice. This practice might encourage spectators to rethink the relationships they have with other people, themselves and the space and objects around them and heighten their awareness of time experienced and lived through.

The irony of this project as a project on the denial of the art object is that it has produced exactly this: a series of art objects that are presented here not as documentation of artistic process (as it might be with live performances), but as four distinctive pieces of video art. This paradox somewhat reflects the

conflicting demands and formal requirements of a practice-led research project like this one. On the one hand, I am obliged to make/create an artistic output/outcome and to prove and defend its existence, and on the other hand, I need to evaluate and question its position in the overall argument of the project and consider its relevance in a wider artistic and research context. This is also the reason why I have so strongly insisted on the primacy of the spectator in this project. Ultimately, how an artwork is perceived from the outside (by its audience), is equally as important, if not more important, than the process of making. This tension is fundamental to a practice-led research project like this, with its different modes of production (creative enquiry and critical reflection), because the author is simultaneously the maker, spectator and critic. The 'object' then is only one element in the process of production, which takes into consideration the pre, during and post of performance.

Performance practice in particular demands an engagement that is much longer than the actual moment of performance. Initially, my inability to imagine how live performance could possibly be represented as artistic practice in a research project has forced me to rethink how I wanted my work to be represented and viewed. A practice-based PhD project like this necessitates multiple forms of documentation and commentary, theory and practice (as it needs to simultaneously and over a longer period of time be present as a 'whole', intertwined as 'one' without hierarchy). Ultimately this realisation has changed the manifestation of my practice from live to recorded video over the process of the four-year project. These different pieces of practice are propositions, distinct from each other and yet related,

as they explore, among other issues, notions of authorship, objecthood, reconstruction and spectatorship in the expanded field of choreography.

7.2 The Future of Choreography

As part of a wider research project my thesis examines the possibility of thinking about dance not only as an aesthetic object but also as an expanded practice, a way of being in the world. Even though I have argued throughout for the necessity of dance (which dance, one might ask) to define itself more specifically, for example by labelling what one does as 'post-conceptual dance' (this, of course, produces a fear of being put in a box or loosing collective coherence), indeed the opposite might be necessary. If dance, or art, is something that is separate from society, it will remain 'outside' on the periphery, assented as counterculture or perceived as the sanctioned space for creative enquiry and critical reflection in our culture. Instead, and this is what I aim to have argued with the term 'expanded practice', the different spheres, whether it be art, culture, politics or economics, should not be thought of as separate societal issues. Choreography and dance can intervene as vehicles for transformation and change in all aspects of life beyond their existence as art objects.[25]

In this research project then, I have argued for the denial of dance as an object. However, dance's qualities, which include ephemerality and precarity, are not something to be judged as a disadvantage to the field. Instead, they

[25] For an excellent example of this methodology see Andrew Hewitt's book *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (2005).

should be valued as qualities which are increasingly becoming powerful phenomena in the contemporary visual as well as the performing arts scene with its blurring of boundaries. Moreover, as these qualities 'infiltrate' art institutions and the cultural landscape more generally, they become omnipresent notions in the current globalised Western society that places an increasing emphasis on temporality, transition, flexibility and movement.

One of the aims of this project was to show, through particular examples, the growing centrality of choreography to current artistic practice both in dance and in visual art. It can be said that the decision to create choreographic work outside of the theatre is a political as well as an aesthetic choice. As the example of Tino Sehgal shows, contemporary art does not need, or rather should not need, to be created by visual artists alone. There is also an economic dimension to the decision to work in the gallery, as it often requires less funding and a smaller production budget than creating dance work in the theatre. Choreographers who do not want to rely on this form of financial support to pursue their work are attracted to, or forced, to work flexibly, to go small scale, to adapt their work to different spaces and formats, to re-do work rather than create new work, to produce work with few or no performers, to create work that does not require space, to present work that is mobile and reproducible (for instance video work). We see a shift happening in the economy of performance/dance, not only with the gallery space becoming the space for performance, but with the performing arts adopting more and more working practices of the visual arts: choreography is turning into curatorial practice.

According to its etymological meaning, the word ‘curate’ derives from the Latin verb ‘curare’, which means ‘to care for’. In this sense it is the task of the curator to preserve the art in and for an appropriate context, to care for the work, to choose accordingly, to create a frame, to produce meaning and, most importantly, to understand and conserve the artist’s intentions and vision. Apart from these traditional definitions, and taking into consideration the expanded exhibition context, the curator also acts as a point of access, a meeting point between production and reception, as she/he creates encounters between artworks and viewers, between artists and audiences and/or between performers and spectator. In an expanded sense, the curator makes possible, if only through a temporary constellation, conversations and dialogue between people and encourages the exchange of ideas, thought and knowledge. Furthermore, curatorship offers a possible link between art practice and theory, as it has both a relation to critique and criticality (or theory) but also strives to present a new way of thinking, often attempting a move towards the yet unknown (in other words, the exploratory element in art practice).

Curating is similar to choreographing in that it involves activities such as arranging, assembling, combining, communicating, contextualising, mediating, ordering, presenting and selecting. Taking all these activities into consideration, the role of the curator and the choreographer become interchangeable, as does the role of the spectator. Curatorship is the all encompassing term for the different practices discussed in the five chapters

of this thesis, namely spectating, participating, editing, collecting and reframing (one could add experiencing, reflecting, writing and making to this list). Hence, the curator is the person who brings all the different roles together by practicing them all at once. Gabriele Brandstetter, Hannah Hurtzig, Virve Sutinen and Hilde Teuchies write on the curating process in the performing arts as a way to 'rethink the strategies of curating in terms of choreography: in terms of composing space, objects and bodies, in opening paths and structures of participation and placement through movement' (2010, p.25).

The various modes and strategies present in choreographic curatorship are reflected in my experience of creating *The End of Choreography*, which is both the title of my short video work and my final solo exhibition. In the case of the exhibition, the relationship between curation as/and choreography is apparent, as I literally curated the space, sounds, projections, television screens and installations, creating one coherent exhibition with the four separate video works.[26] As you can see from the photographs, the different spaces and multiple ways in which the videos were presented, ultimately determined the relationship with the viewer and how the work was perceived. For example, *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* was presented as an installation that included a sofa, coffee table, laptop and two pairs of headphones. This set-up for two viewers mirrored the split screen editing of the video and emphasised the duality in the work.

[26] See Appendix 5 for photographic documentation.

In the case of the video *The End of Choreography*, this relationship between curation and/as choreography is less obvious. In the work I mixed images with written and spoken texts, used references from different disciplines and historical era, quoted well-known international theorists and philosophers and local choreographers and dance practitioners, and referred to pieces I had seen, read about and participated in. Thus I created a variety of contexts and reference points, not unlike a curator would do when organising a festival or an exhibition. As I say in the video: 'When I think about the end of choreography, I think about the choreographer, *this* choreographer, who withdraws [or disappears] from the scene and is replaced [or displaced] by dancers, curators, objects, thinkers, texts, images, machines, or PowerPoint presentations'. The video triggered a series of comments, statements, exchanges, dialogues, personal and public conversations, online and offline, when it was mentioned by dance critic Judith Mackrell in her article 'Choreography is dead. Long live dance' on the Guardian dance blog from 27th November 2013. I do not want to replicate these discussions here but the very fact that it *did* trigger a discussion about the current state of affairs, whether this be the end, or future, of choreography and dance, leaves me feeling hopeful and encouraged.

To summarise, the objective of this thesis was to show that the legacy of conceptual dance is not (yet) exhausted. Conceptual dance since the 1990s, which is often said to have been reviving the legacy of the 1960s and postmodern dance, has opened up (once again) the possibilities of what could be defined as dance. I have argued throughout the thesis that post-

conceptual dance at the beginning of the 21st century operates within an expanded field, in which dancers and choreographers are continuing to push against the boundaries of their art form in order to (re-) claim dance's position within the artistic field, making dance relevant to a wider artistic, cultural, political and social context. By doing so they are expanding the discipline of dance and its discourse through critical dance studies.

In conclusion, the aim of the project was to extend the notion of what is considered dance and I intended to achieve this by exercising an expanded dance practice. I have examined how dance practice, in an expanded field, can contribute and expand the theory of dance. This transition from 'denial' to 'expansion' is of conceptual as well as methodological importance to this project, because post-conceptual dance increases the range of 'objects' that can be considered dance. Finally, and in line with my project on the simultaneous denial and expansion of the object, I see this writing on practice, this writing practice, not as an object but as a series of fragments, displacements and contingents, which I intend to expand upon in subsequent projects. The future of dance is not over; it is yet to come.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: *The End of Choreography* – Script

When I think about the end of choreography I think about…

… the meaning of the word and its Greek roots, literally meaning dance-writing. And how it happened that these two supposedly opposed words come together in one term. Because, let's be honest: the body cannot write.

… Roland Barthes and how the symbolic death of the author must mean the birth of the reader and perhaps by extension to the theatre, the birth of the spectator. And then by extension to dance, would the death of the choreographer mean the birth of the dancer or the birth of the dance-watcher?

… Mårten Spångberg who writes on his blog: "Dance has been banned from history because of its *ephemeral* status as Peggy Phelan wrote in 1993, *performance becomes itself through its own disappearance*.
When something dies something new can emerge, but if dance has no history, this means that either dance is new, like NEW, all the time, or is rendered immobile exactly due its lack of history. Is it possibly so that dance precisely because it lacks history cannot issue transformation, and at the same time because it has no history it cannot produce contemporaneity?" [http://spangbergianism.wordpress.com/2010/10/18/dance-is-dead-long-live-dance/]

… the death of probably the two most important contemporary choreographers in 2009 [Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham].

… André Lepecki and his definition of choreography as a system of command.

… I think of Tajal Harrell's piece *Tickling the Giant Sleep* in which his dancers take a sleeping drug before the 8 hours performance installation. I think about how the choreographer is perhaps more of an attendant, both in the sense of physically being there but also in a sense of caring.

… Boris Charmatz and his company's manipulation of limb children in *enfant*.

… Roberta [Jean] and Steph [McMann]'s piece *Road Postures* at this years Dance Umbrella and how it was basically a solo for Steph and how Roberta choose to describe her role in the programme notes as artistic direction, and not as choreography.

… Gillie [Kleiman] and how it says on her Chisenhale profile that she does *dance stuff that doesn't always look like dance*.

… *re-re-twothousandth-re*, a piece by Trio Collective which was performed at this very stage [Chisenhale Dance Space] 2 ½ years ago and I think about how we basically likened the act of choreography to the act of editing past choreographies together.

… my first choreography that I ever made called *Hybrid* and how deeply uncomfortable and unethical I felt asking my dancers to improvise on tasks and make material, then selecting the bits that I liked, putting them together and saying that I was the choreographer of the piece. And I think of all the programme notes that say *choreography in collaboration with the dancers* and I think about what that really means and about the (im)possibility of collaboration.

… I also think about the blurry line between dancer and choreographer and how most of us probably describe ourselves as both.

… Michael Kliën, who in 1994 (19 years ago), declared "Choreography and Dance to be fully independent of one-another; i.e. as autonomous disciplines requiring specialist skill-sets for each." The piece was called 68% choreography and it was a performance-installation for a machine and a violin. [https://vimeo.com/71245773]

… and I think about the fact that choreography doesn't necessarily need people and that we can find choreography in everything [swarms, flogs, highways, demonstrations].

… Marquez and Zangs and what they mean when they say that they want to "raise questions and awareness of what choreography can do as it is too commonly reduced to the word dance." [http://creativeandlive.com/archives/2013/11/04/theres-a-dancer-in-all-of-us]

… Charlie [Ashwell] and Ellie [Sikorski]'s recent online dialogue on Bellyflop [Magazine] about curators including circus into a dance programme. [http://bellyflopmag.com/reviews/currency-company-bal-jeanne-mordoj-lisbeth-gruwez-voetvolk-vzw]

… Marcel Duchamp placing an upside down urinal into a gallery in 1914 and declaring it art and that then makes me think of Andy Warhol and his Brillo Boxes which were just copies of real Brillo Boxes and that then makes me think about Arthur Danto (who died last month) declaring the end of art because anything from now could be art. And that makes me think of about Noël Carroll writing about *Trio A* being the end of dance because from 1966 onwards everyday movement, indeed every movement, could be called dance. But isn't it too easy to say that all dance is really just movement or all movement is choreographed?

… the recent move of dance to the museum/gallery [Tate] with all its potentials and problems, and I think about the exploitation of choreographic strategies by visual artists.

… Tino Sehgal and what it does to dance when someone who clearly comes from a background in dance and whose practice clearly used well-known strategies and tools for producing choreographic works situates himself in a fine art context, not as a choreographer who makes work in the museum, but as an artist operating in the art world. [Turner Prize?]

… Alex [Hemsley] and the Swedish Dance History Vol.4, where they [Mårten Spångberg] write in the editorial: "An expanded choreography owns the future. Dance as we know it, is soon, if not already dead as opera or Dixie-land jazz. Very dead. Yet, the future, more than ever, belongs to choreography, but only if it acknowledges its potentiality as an expanded capacity. Choreography is not the art of making dances (a directional set of tools), it is a generic set of capacities to be applied to any kind of production, analyses, or organization. Choreography is a structural approach to the world and dance its mode of knowing the world it ventures into. Dance is the future embodied, a promise of that to come."

… what the organisers [Mårten Spångberg] of the *Expanded Choreography: Situations. Movements, Objects,..* conference last year in Barcelona wrote:

"Choreography is today emancipating itself from dance, engaging in a vibrant process of articulation. Choreographers are experimenting with new models of production, alternative formats, have broadened out the understanding of social choreography considerably and are mobilizing innovative frontiers in respect of self-organization, empowerment and autonomy. Simultaneously, we have seen a number of exhibitions in which choreography is often placed in a tension between movement, situation and objects. Choreography needs to redefine itself in order to include artists and others who use choreographic strategies without necessarily relating them to dance. At the same time, it needs to remain inclusive of choreographers involved in practices such as engineering situations, organization, social choreography and movement as well as expanding towards cinematic strategies, documentary and documentation and rethinking publication, exhibition, display, mediatization, production and post-production. In short, choreography is currently experiencing a veritable revolution. Aesthetically, it is turning away from established notions of dance and its strong association with skill and craft, to instead establish autonomous discourses that override causalities among conceptualization, production, expression and representation. At the same time it is gaining momentum on a political level as it is placed in the middle of a society to a large degree organized around movement, subjectivity and immaterial exchange. Choreography is not a priori performative, nor is it bound to expression and reiteration of subjectivity; it is becoming an expanded practice, a practice that is political in and of itself."

[http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations]

… the choreographer, *this* choreographer, who withdraws (voluntarily or involuntarily) from the scene and is replaced by dancers, curators, objects, thinkers, texts, images, machines, or PowerPoint presentations.

… I also think about its future. How protective should we be? How open-minded? How expanded can we go? If anything can be choreography the term perhaps renders itself meaningless, redundant, obsolete.

So, I think about the end of choreography as being simultaneously its future and I want to ask all of you, today: What is the purpose and role of the choreographer? What is left for choreography to say, to do?

Key
Black: spoken text
Blue: Images
Red: words in power-point presentation
Italics: quotes

Appendix 2: *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* – Transcript

You know, all along the modern times the myth of the future has been connected to the myth of energy; think about Faust, for instance. This idea that the future is energy: more and more and more. More speed, more strength, more consumption, more things, more violence. Futurism is the point of passage, the final step to full modernity, and futurism is the exaltation of violence, of despising the woman, for instance. The woman is weakness, is senselessness, is feebleness. Everything the modern energy wants to forget about: forget the woman, despise the woman, exalt war, exalt violence, exalt acceleration. This is futurism.

The end of the future

Now futurism has brought the world to this point of total despair. Futurism without future. This is the present reality we are facing and we have to invent something beyond this obsession of the future because the future is over. And saying that the future is over does not mean that tomorrow we will not get up—we will get up—but please, don't be obsessed about the idea that want more things, more violence, more speed. We want more time to live. At a certain moment in the year '77, as far as I can remember, we had the perception that the future was over. We had the perception that the idea of the constant growth was leading us to destruction and to war, to total exploitation of our life, in the name of the future. So, in some places of the world, for instance in the United Kingdom, where Mrs. Thatcher was taking the power and saying: "there is no such thing as society" so, some people cried "No Future!". If future has to be a future without society, future where only economy, where capitalism, where wealth and accumulation is legitimate, and society is nothing, if it was this we say: "No Future!" In some other places in the world—for instance in Italy, in Bologna, and in Rome—students, young proletarians, people said: "we want our life now."

You see, '77 was the strangest of the years because in a sense it was the year of color, of happiness, of creativity, of invention of new possibilities for life. But at the same time or maybe suddenly after it became the darkest of moments because we became aware that the possibility of richness, of joy, all of a sudden was destroyed by the restoration of capitalism, of profit, of future.

Post-futurism

So what now? You see what is happening now, at the beginning of the second decade of this century that comes after the end of the future. You can see this destruction, this devastation, of the possibilities that modernity has created. You see it in the dictatorship of the financial economy. Financial economy is destroying intelligence, is destroying public schools, is destroying creativity, is destroying the environment, is destroying water, is destroying weather. Everything has to be sacrificed to the growth—this abstract growth—of money, of value, of nothing. So, how can we withdrawal from this kind of craziness. I think that we have to act, and to live, in a post-futurist way

which means we have to choose a slowness of pleasure—like the birds in the sky, like the flowers in the fields, they don't need to work, they don't need to accumulate, they don't need to possess. They need to have pleasure, to live, to live in time. Time is not something that you can accumulate. Time is something you can accommodate in, and take pleasure of the decomposition of yourself. Taking pleasure in the becoming-other of yourself. Becoming-other means being yourself without protecting yourself. This is post-futurism, I guess.

Ungrowth

Ungrowth is a difficult word to use. I actually don't really like the word. It is an approximation to a better concept that we should invent. Growth means the constant expansion of capital, of property, of the world of things. But we do not need not more things, we need more time. We do not need more property, we need more joy. The collective intelligence, the social organization of collective brain has created the possibility of producing everything we need without more exploitation. So the problem now is not to restart growth; the problem now is to find a way to enjoy what we already have, and develop the possibility of self-care, of self-therapy, of self-education. Society has to come out from the obsession of growth.
The problem of this word—ungrowth—is that it seems to hint to something less. Not at all. What we need is not less life, less pleasure. We need more life! More pleasure! But more life, more pleasure does not imply more consumption, more merchandise, more work! We are dying because of the huge bubble of work. We have been working too much during the last 500 years. We have been working too too much during the last 30 years.
Stop working now. Start living, please.

Singularity

A French philosopher called Simondon uses the word individualization. Individualization is the ability to be yourself in separation from the world. Singularity is something different; singularity is the ability to become yourself, creating the world with your becoming-yourself.

The history of capitalism, the history of accumulation, of growth, is the history of the homogenization of different lifestyles, of different rhythms, of different relationships with the world. Everything must become similar, homogenous, exchangeable. Singularity is the ability to withdraw from this kind of homogenization. Singularity is joy in becoming yourself.

Precarization

In the second volume of the *Grundrisse*, Marx speaks of General Intellect. General intellect is a fundamental concept if you want to understand something of what is happening now, a century and a half after Marx. General intellect means the connection of infinite fragments of human intelligence in a continuous machine of production.

Cognitariat is a word, a concept, meaning at the same time the general intellect at work and the body—the denied body, the forgotten body—of the general intellect. Because, as you know, the general intellect has a body. An erotic body, a social body. But when we are working in the network machine we forget about that body. This is sickening us. This is producing pathologies. This is producing psycho-pathologies, social pathologies. So, cognitariat, the concept of cognitariat, means: "remember, you—general intellect—you have a body." This body is precaritized in present conditions. What does the word precarious, precaritization mean? You see, what is work now-a-days? Work is becoming an ocean, an infinite sea of fragments of abstract time. Fragments, recombine-able fragments, fractals, I would say. Fractals of time, of working-time, of intellectual-working-time, joining, connecting together in the networked machine. So the capitalist does not need to buy you, your person. You have rights, you have a life, you have a family, you have a union. So capital does not need you anymore. He needs your time, your fragments of time. This is precaritization. Forgetting about the body, forgetting about the person, forgetting about the erotic needs and desire of the person. Forgetting about the unions, about the social and political rights of the person, and directly taking your time. Your time fragments, your time fractals, and recombining into a networked machine. Cognitariat is: remember that you have a body. General intellect is looking for the body.

Semiocapital

When capitalism connects with the general intellect it starts to produce in a different way—no more things, no more cars, no more iron and metal and steel. Well, iron and metal and steel and cars and things still are there, but what we are really producing is not that. It's the concept, it's the sign, it's the semio, as the old Greeks said. Semiocapital is the new condition of capitalism in a world, in a situation, where the production is essentially semio-production. Production of projects, production of financial figures, production of words, production of concepts, production of simulation. Semiocapital is essentially about simulation. Simulated capitalism. This is semiocapitalism.

Actually, when you think about the present condition, you should be aware it's not so much about cognitive capitalism. Capitalism is not cognitive, capitalism is financial if you want, is abstract, is simulated. Work is cognitive work. And capital is becoming more and more the immaterial world of production of illusions.

Semiocapitalism is all about acceleration, acceleration of the info-sphere. The info-sphere is the environment filled and saturated with signs. We produce signs, we receive and consummate signs, and the acceleration of the info-sphere is increase and growth in capital value. More signs, more simulations, more and more. And this kind of acceleration is producing an affect of designification of the world. More signs, more information, less meaning. Remember that this idea of enmeshed information was an idea of William Burroughs. Burroughs said, "more information, less meaning." So

what is happening is a kind of pathologization of the psycho-sphere. The acceleration of the info-sphere, the acceleration of the rhythm of information is producing an effect of contraction and of sickness in the psycho-sphere, or the sphere of our psychic and sensual relationships. So, you see, that this process of acceleration is producing an effect of suffering. Suffering is the main problem of the first Internet generation. Of the first generation which learned more words from the machines than from matter. Psychic suffering. Depression. Panic. Attention Deficit Disorders. Epidemic of suicide. This is the mark of the last decade.

Thera-poetry

Giorgio Agamben, in a text about language and death, says that the voice is the meeting point of body and meaning. Interesting idea. And I would say that poetry is the meeting point of meaning and sound—meaning and music. Because music does not mean only sound, it means rhythm. And what we need is to find our singular rhythm. Singularity is all about rhythm. It is about recording your refrain, your ability to relate to the stars in the sky, to the ground, to the body of the other, to your own body. So I say the thera-poetry, and I think about the thera-poetic affect of my voice, of writing poetry, poetry, voice, body, coming back from what has been denied because of the acceleration of the info-sphere.

I have a dream, a dream of a website where you can click the link and the screen gets black. You cannot check your mail, you cannot check your facebook profile, you cannot go anywhere in the net. You only can listen to my voice. This is thera-poetry in my mind. Bye bye.

Appendix 3: *Screen Tests* – Script

Order of takes (1 min. each)	**Right Person Actions**	**Left Person Actions**	**Camera Person Actions (Gels)**	**Other actions for in between takes** (in no particular order)
Take 1	happy	confused		
Take 2	put on sunglasses	happy		
Take 3	sad	put on sunglasses	yellow	take off/put on tops/jumpers/shirts
Take 4	nervous	looking at right person		
Take 5	bored	bored	green	
Take 6	eating banana	cool with sunglasses		put hair in ponytail (if possible)
Take 7	looking at left person	brushing teeth	orange	
Take 8	confused	happy	blue	put on lipstick (left person)
Take 9	cool	sad	pink	
Take 10	excited	excited		

Appendix 4: Exhibition Notes

THE END OF CHOREOGRAPHY
Antje Hildebrandt

Antje Hildebrandt presents a series of video works that extend representations of dance into the visual arts.

For this exhibition at LimaZulu she presents video works from 2012-2013 that explore, among others, notions of authorship, objecthood, reconstruction and spectatorship in the expanded field of choreography.

The End of Choreography (2013)
Screen Tests (2013)
After the Future: A Homage to Bifo (2012)
Learning about the 60s (2012)

Private View: Friday 7 March 2014, 7-11pm
Open by Appointment 24/7, 8-13 March (please call 02088007428 to arrange a viewing)
LimaZulu: http://www.limazulu.co.uk

About Antje

Antje Hildebrandt is a London-based choreographer, performer and researcher. Her work, which takes the form of conventional theatre pieces as well as site-specific works, installations and video works, has been presented in various platforms, festivals and galleries in the UK, Germany, Italy and Sweden.

As well as making solo work she often collaborates with other artists (most recently artist Patrick Staff) and she has worked and performed with Serbian Artistic Collective Doplgenger, Willi Dorner, Lea Anderson, Ivana Müller, Franko B and Tino Sehgal. Antje is a member of Trio, a collective of four artists who are interested in collaborative performance practice.

Antje's writing has been published in Desearch, Activate and The Swedish Dance History and she has presented papers at national and international conferences and symposia. She is the Newsletter Editor for the Society for

Dance Research where she also co-curates the Choreographic Forum. She was the Associate Curator for the Dance Critical Theory Group Autumn Season 2013 organised by Dance Art Foundation.

http://antjehildebrandt.blogspot.co.uk

About the works

***Screen Tests* (2013)**

by Antje Hildebrandt with Stephanie McMann & Flora Wellesley Wesley, Stella Dimitrakopoulou & Else Tunemyr, Will Jennings & Jeanne Gargam, Nina Feldman & James-Paul Kelly, Jonny Blamey & Simon Glendinning, Kuo-Chieh Liang & Daniel Cabrero, Martine Painter & Helena Webb, Ellen Sieber & Nina Windisch, Helka Kaski & Clare Daly, Krista Nella Martina Vuori & Wayne Alan Summerbell, Pauline Appleton & Rowan Appleton-Wickens, Alenka Herman & Rosalie Wahlfrid, Brendan Stapleton & John Riley, Negar Esfandiary & Friend, Antje Hildebrandt & Ruben Plaza Garcia, Nicholas Quinn & Hamish MacPherson, Lea-Christin Garrelfs & Henrik Junklewitz, Seke Chimutengwende & Martha Passapokoulou, Michelle Lynch & James Reynolds, Rebecca Stancliffe & Elena Koukoli & edited by Emma Zangs

Screen Tests are a collection of video works inspired by Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* from the 1960s. These playfully choreographed short films are part of a wider investigation into the concept of choreography as a practice of being – questioning what it means to be (a)live, to be oneself, to be present(ed), to be with, and in front of, others and a camera.

***After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* (2012)**

Concept and Video: Antje Hildebrandt
Choreography and Performance: Stella Dimitrakopoulou & Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

In *After the Future: A Homage to Bifo* a performer copies, without prior rehearsal, words and movements from a video which shows Franco 'Bifo' Berardi explaining key concepts from his book *After the Future* (2011). The video explores the relationship between humans and technology and asks where meaning resides - in the body, in the voice, in gestures, in words, in spoken or written language, in movement language, in languages of the body.

***Learning about the 60s* (2012)**

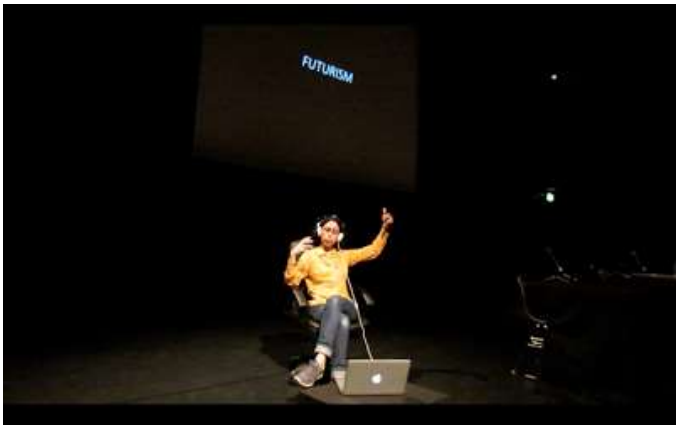
Concept and Video: Antje Hildebrandt

Choreography: Yvonne Rainer
Interpretation: Jessica Bodington, Jayde Cardin & Emma Morgan

In *Learning about the 60s* three dancers are performing *Trio A* (1966) by Yvonne Rainer with cameras attached to different parts of their body (leg, arm and stomach), thereby exploring ideas of movement, as it is not only the dancers that are moving but the space itself. As well as raising questions around ownership and authorship, the video is also a dialogue between visibility and invisibility, interiority and exteriority, knowledge and imagination, ultimately questioning what it means to practise this seminal dance piece. It proposes the dance studio as a performative place and a performance space - a site that is more about progress and process than about a final tangible product.

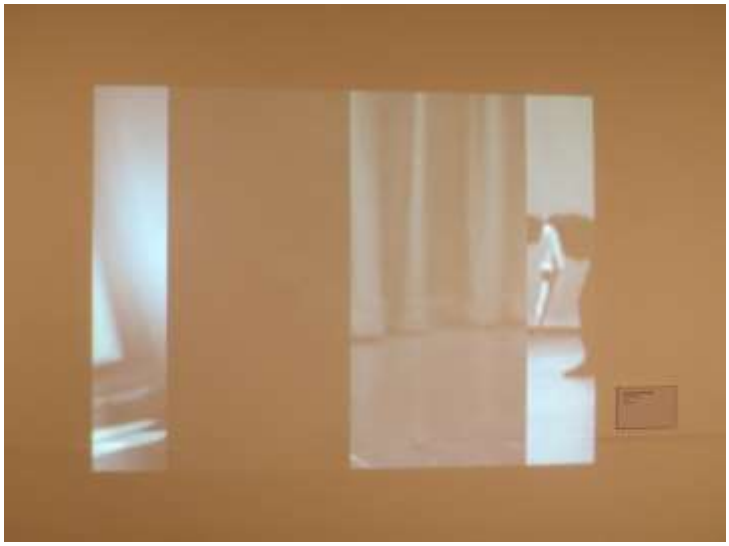
Appendix 5: Photographic Documentation

After the Future: A Homage to Bifo – Live Performance at The Industry Invites… (Hotel Elephant, London), 19/07/2012



After the Future: A Homage to Bifo – Live Performance at Performing Documents Conference (Arnolfini, Bristol), 14/04/2013

Screen Tests – Exhibition View at Recherché (Wolverhampton Art Gallery), 21/09/2013 – 05/10/2013



Learning about the 60s – Exhibition View at Recherché (Wolverhampton Art Gallery), 21/09/2013 – 05/10/2013

Exhibition View – Performance Hub Research Festival (Walsall), 04/10/2013

Screen Tests – Screening at ChaChaCha (Chisenhale Dance Space, London), 01/11/2013

Screen Tests – Screening at Smash Lab XIII (The Book Club, London), 04/02/2014

Screen Tests – Exhibition View at The End of Choreography (Lima Zulu Project Space, London), 08/03/2014 – 13/03/2014

Screen Tests (Multitudes) – Exhibition View at artsdepot OPEN 2014 (London), 08/04/2014 – 24/04/2014